









To Father Connolly for the  
class in Irish Literature.







THE IRISH REVOLUTION  
AND HOW IT CAME ABOUT







# THE IRISH REVOLUTION AND HOW IT CAME ABOUT BY WILLIAM O'BRIEN

"Rosebery's ('predominant partner') speech about convincing England in connection with Home Rule was most unfortunate and easily answered by Irishmen who might say": (and here he became earnest and very serious) "How are we to convince you? Is it as we did by the Volunteers, by the Tithe War, when Wellington said it was yielding to Civil War, or by the Clerkenwell Explosion, which are the only means that ever have convinced England?" —  
GLADSTONE TO SIR ALGERNON WEST.

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# THE IRISH REVOLUTION AND HOW IT CAME ABOUT

## INTRODUCTION

WHEN the United Irish League re-established the Political Unity broken up for ten years by the Parnell Split of 1890, the "miracle" (see page 18) was followed up by a movement for a wider National Unity, the effects of which are only now beginning to be understood. Its aim was the daring one of reconciling the two antagonistic hosts of the Land War, and combining them for the crowning achievement of a National Settlement by consent.

The inspiring principle of the new movement was the healing of animosity between Irishmen of all the warring classes and religious persuasions, and, upon that basis, an international peace with England. Its fundamental axioms were (*a*) that a solution of the Irish Difficulty must first be sought among Irishmen in Ireland, and (*b*) that its legislative enactment must be the work, not of one particular English Party, Liberal or Unionist, but of all British and Irish Parties in common. These are the principles which—received at the time with mild contempt by English politicians as an Eirenicon, and persecuted by certain powerful Irish ones as though they covered some monstrous treason against the Irish Nation—have by this time found all but universal acceptance in both countries and among all Parties in the Act of 1903 for the abolition of Landlordism and (although in a mutilated shape) in the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921. Not, however, before armed Revolution had to be called



in to repair, so far as was possible, the tragic mistakes of Irish and British politicians during nearly twenty ignoble years.

The era of confessions and of contrition has already set in from the British side. One passage from a confidential letter of Mr. Lloyd George to the writer (dated 14th July, 1919), which Mr. Lloyd George has given me permission to publish (see page 416) reveals at a flash the secret of the failure in the intermediate years and explains the necessity for the present volume :

“ I think you were fundamentally right when you sought an agreement amongst all sections, creeds and classes of Irishmen. I am afraid settlement is impossible until that has been achieved.”

Here is the mature conclusion of the British Prime Minister that the Policy of Conciliation *plus* Business of the All-for-Ireland League was “ fundamentally right ” from the start, and that its defeat was the defeat of everything that mattered for the two countries. The confession is all the more interesting because it comes from the man who was long the most potent British instrument in deriding and thwarting the policy to which he now has the courage to do justice. And it will be found that even at that late date he had only half learned the lesson taught by the Irish Revolution.

Another testimony of transcendent interest is that of one who, of all the Liberal Cabinet who might have carried Home Rule and did not, had least of the party politician and most of the far-ranging statesman in his composition—Viscount Grey of Fallodon (the Sir Edward Grey of the Home Rule debates). Here is the fruit of his musings over the Liberal mishandling of Home Rule (House of Lords, 24th November, 1920) :

“ The question I put to myself is this : In the years of failure where have we gone wrong ? What has been the root-cause of our failure ? . . . I think



the mistake we made in the beginning was that we did not sufficiently realize the absolute necessity of taking into consideration the feeling of Ulster."

Truly, a Daniel come to judgment! But that was only half the mistake—the other and the still graver half being that they "did not sufficiently realize" the feeling of Ireland for Ulster as bone of her bone, and the breath of life of her unity as a Nation. The result was that having first refused to woo Ulster by "compulsory attraction" they proceeded to their opposite extremity of folly by cutting her off from Ireland with the slash of a clumsy surgeon's knife.

The Hibernian politicians, who were the prime movers of the mischief which undid the country and the Liberals and themselves, have not yet imitated the good sense of their British patrons by (as the French would say) entering upon the way of avowals on their own part. They have, however, ceased to count. It is only the evil they have done that lives after them. But how completely all the leaders who succeeded them as the authorised spokesmen of the Irish race since the downfall of the Parliamentarians, share and have made their own of the aspirations which used to be the special reproach of the All-for-Ireland League, two short quotations will sufficiently demonstrate. Wrote Mr. Arthur Griffith, the founder of Sinn Féin and the first President of the Irish Free State :

"The exclusion of Ulster or any part of Ireland would mean for us the nullification of our hopes and aspirations for the future Irish Nation. It would mean the erection of sharp, permanent, eternal dividing-lines between Catholics and Protestants, whereas our ideal has been an Irish nation in the future made up of a blend of all races, of all classes and of all creeds."

Mr. De Valera himself, the first President of the Irish Republic, said to me so late as August 12th, 1922 (see page 429) :



"I have been all along in favour of peace with England, and at one time could have carried it all right, if Lloyd George had placed me in a position to offer the young men a measure of National Independence for the whole country on reasonable terms of external association. In the London negotiations I should have preferred to make our first stand upon the Integrity of Ireland, and the inclusion of the Six Counties. All the world would have understood our stand against Partition and would have been with us, and in England's then fix Craig could have been certainly brought to consent. . . . I was always ready to go as far as you went yourself to bring in Ulster by friendly means."

To clinch the matter, President Cosgrave and the Chamber of Deputies of the Irish Free State, while these sheets are passing through the Press, have invited the whole four of the representatives of the Land-owners at the Land Conference of 1902-3—the Earl of Dunraven, the Earl of Mayo, Col. (now Sir) W. Hutcheson Poë, and Col. (now Sir) Nugent Everard—to accept seats in the new Senate, and have acclaimed Mr. T. M. Healy as their first Governor General, thus singling out for honour in the eyes of posterity the Conciliationists who for the previous fifteen years were covered with opprobrium as "swindling landlords" or traitors to Home Rule.

How came it to pass that the policy which all the weightiest of the elder statesmen of Britain and the two most considerable personages of the Irish Revolution are thus united in pronouncing to have been elementary wisdom, had to struggle for a bare hearing throughout a fifteen-years' losing battle? By what arts were a people of keen political intelligence like the Irish hypnotised into silence while they were being led into an opposite policy which it is now hard to distinguish from insanity and which was to bring them nothing but six years of unspeakable anguish and



a prodigal waste of their best blood and treasure? How did it happen that those who, with an all but unanimous mandate from their country and from the Parliamentary Party, had succeeded in restoring four-fifths of the soil of Ireland to the people, and were proceeding to incorporate a million of Irish Protestants with our nation by their free consent, were actually arraigned as though these were the crimes of traitors? Above all, how came it that those who, themselves confessing they were rebelling against the policy which received from the country "an absolutely overwhelming vote of confidence" (see page 17) rose up to frustrate these great enterprises and to alarm and alienate that powerful minority of our countrymen by the establishment of a pseudo-Catholic Hibernian ascendancy leading to no alternative except the Partition of Ireland, to which they became themselves consenting parties—how came it that the mutineers were for a long course of years glorified as the anointed apostles of "Majority Rule" and the heroes of National Unity? These are amongst the enigmas to which the present volume is designed to supply the answers.

Not the least strange part of the story is that this is the first time when the truth will have a dog's chance of coming to the knowledge of the masses of the nation it most vitally concerns. Such is the completeness with which the facts have hitherto been travestied beyond all verisimilitude, it may be safely affirmed that there are comparatively few in Ireland and scarcely a handful in Britain, who can yet see in their true perspective the long train of events which brought a degenerate Parliamentaryism to its doom, and necessitated and justified the Irish Revolution of 1916-21. The time has come when the attempt can be made at all events without unworthy heat, to imitate the triennial custom of the ancient Parliament of Tara and "to purge our contemporary annals of all false and spurious relations." He that is but flesh



cannot always hope to preserve a spirit of heavenly detachment while he brings to light the system of suppression and persecution from which his friends and himself suffered during a considerable space of their lives, without any hope of redress or even of an honest hearing. But the protagonists on all sides have by this time passed from the arena of Irish public life. For the personal part of the injury, events have already made generous atonement to ourselves. No tongue, however unclean—no pen, however obscure—is likely henceforth to repeat the accusations which, to the ruin of the country and of our accusers, bewildered the older generation now passing to its account. Nobody of sense will repine if *sic vos non vobis mellificatis*, *apes* is the decree of Fate for all the pioneers; what matters is that the honey should be hived if it were only to give to the life of this poor world some taste of sweetness. The young Harmodiuses of the Revolution are, doubtless, still easier in their minds as to their own part of the vilification and of the vindication. But these, after all, are matters of stern historic truth. What remains is that the coming men with whom must lie the making or marring of the nation their valour has called into being should not grow up in piteous ignorance of the deceit which, for their predecessors, placed the events of the early twentieth century in a light so grotesquely the reverse of the truth that the falsification might well pass for some Satanic practical joke at the expense of a whole people. The primary appeal of this book is to the increasing company of scholars, thinkers, and students for whom the truthfulness of her History is the most sacred charge of a nation. They have only—it is submitted with some confidence—to scrutinise the facts and documents herein presented, to be in a position to furnish the youth who will be the architects of our future with the means of demolishing for themselves the edifice of topsy-turvy falsehood which has



hitherto been accepted as our contemporary history, but which will be found to crumble at the first touch of honest investigation. Assuredly it shall be the fault of the writer, if the narrative do not prove to be one of fascinating human interest, as well as paying a long overdue debt of truth and justice to the History of our times.

The suggestion of an Inter-Party Home Rule Settlement was first broached by Gladstone after the General Election of 1886 had placed Lord Salisbury in power. For their own sake, as well as Ireland's, wo's the day the Liberal Party were not wise enough to follow the counsel of their greatest leader during their own long spell of power from 1906 to 1914! It has been the hard fate of the Liberal Party that they who were generally the first to sow the seeds of great Irish measures were rarely able themselves to gather the harvest. It was the Liberal Party who disestablished the Irish Church in 1868 and essayed the first considerable reform of the Irish Land Laws in 1881, but it was only the Tory Party who could have ended the Agrarian War by abolishing Feudal Landlordism root-and-branch, and it was only a combination of the two Parties which could have beguiled England into submitting to the Irish Free State Treaty of 1921. For Irish Nationalists, at all events, the lesson of wisdom in our dealings with English Parties ought to have been burned sufficiently deep into our hearts and it was this: Take all you can get from the competition of Tories and Liberals, but enslave yourselves neither to the one English Party nor to the other, and, above all aim at the combination of them both—whether inspired by lofty British statesmanship or by more earthy motives—if you want to ensure legislative sanction to a scheme of National Independence—cautious and gradual, it may be, but unfettered in its force of expansion and broad-based upon a good understanding between the Nationalist majority and the Unionist minority at home in Ireland.



The new movement began with an achievement not less splendid, and at the time immeasurably more surprising than the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921, which, indeed, its chief Sinn Féin signatory, as will be seen, freely confessed, the work of his predecessors alone could have made possible. In one respect, more splendid still, for it was the work of a United, not of a Partitioned Ireland. The declaration of the Tory Chief Secretary (Mr. George Wyndham) but for which the Land Conference of 1902-3 could never have been assembled pronounced the bankruptcy of English Rule twenty years before it was formally acknowledged by the Imperial Parliament. Here were Wyndham's momentous words: "*No Government can settle the Irish land question. It must be settled by the parties interested. The extent of useful action on the part of any Government is limited to providing facilities, in so far as that may be possible, for giving effect to any settlement arrived at by the parties.*"

It was the germ of National Self-Determination thirteen years before President Wilson's Fourteen Points. The admission and the undertaking pointed the way by which Landlordism was bloodlessly extinguished, and by which, had the fates been kind, English rule might have been extinguished no less bloodlessly. Four representatives commissioned by the Irish Parliamentary Party (Mr. John E. Redmond, Mr. T. C. Harrington, Lord Mayor of Dublin, Mr. T. W. Russell and myself) and four representatives of the Irish Unionists elected *ad hoc* (the Earl of Dunraven, the Earl of Mayo, Col. afterwards Sir William Hutcheson Poe, and Col. afterwards Sir Everard Nugent, His Majesty's Lieutenant for Meath), met in the Dublin Mansion House, and in the course of five sittings effected a settlement of the Irish Land War which had raged without intermission for more than a century, and, notwithstanding more than forty



Abortive Acts of the British Parliament to assuage it, was raging more furiously than ever when the Land Conference of 1902-3 assembled for its apparently desperate task.

Incredible as the happy outcome was for the cynics, the conditions of the moment were extraordinarily propitious. The Tories were in power and enjoyed the more or less rueful co-operation of the Liberals in Irish affairs. George Wyndham, the Chief Secretary, inherited the vision and the romance of his great-grandfather Lord Edward Fitzgerald, to whom he bore a singular resemblance, in captivating address as well as in physical beauty. In deference to the diseased suspiciousness which is apt to poison all Irish controversies, I never personally exchanged a word (or except on one occasion, even a letter) with the man with the greatest work of whose life circumstances gave me a closer association than, perhaps, fell to the fate of any other Irishman ;<sup>1</sup> but if all who knew him are not in a conspiracy of untruth, his inmost sympathies would have impelled him to go as far in the direction of the most glowing aspirations of Ireland as Irishmen would let him ; and he had a Lord Lieutenant (the Earl of Dudley) and an Under Secretary (Sir Antony Mac Donnell) no less sympathetic, if less passionate, than himself. When King Edward the Peacemaker, on the day when the House of Commons was passing the final stage of Wyndham's Bill for the expropriation of Landlordism, was making

<sup>1</sup> Wyndham's own Irish instinct led him to be equally cautious. In the only letter that ever passed between us he wrote (April 14, 1908) :

"I have felt that the conditions of Irish political controversy precluded me from communicating with you. I have regretted this. For I have often wished to express to you personally, and to express in public, my sense of the loyal—I would say chivalrous—manner in which you stuck to the spirit, as well as the letter, of the agreement between classes and parties on the Land Question which alone made the Act of 1903 possible."



his triumphal progress through a Dublin delirious with joy (of how many ages ago we seem to be writing !) he as justly as tactfully picked out the handsome young Chief Secretary to sit with him and the queen in his carriage as the real hero of achievements in Ireland which were bound to go a good deal further.

If ever there was an United Ireland it was that which at one stroke and for ever put an end to the Land War—an infinitely deeper dividing-line between Irishmen than Home Rule, because it was a question of their very existence for tenants and landlords alike—and put an end to it by the co-operation of the warring classes themselves, and upon terms which have stood the test of satisfying both sides equally well. The Protestant and Presbyterian farmers who form the bulk of the Unionist inhabitants of Ulster—at all times as determined foes of Landlordism as the Catholics of the South—found themselves the owners in fee of their own lands and homesteads, and that through the direct agency of those whom they had been brought up to regard as the most extreme of the Nationalist leaders. The Unionist landlords themselves—again, thanks to that co-operation of the fiercest of their old Nationalist antagonists “which alone made the Act of 1903 possible”—became the happy possessors of an income as safe as the Bank of England, in lieu of one that had to be every year fought for by hateful and costly eviction campaigns, when it was not being hacked to pieces by Judicial Rent Commissioners or legislators at Westminster. The most influential of the Irish nobles and country gentlemen who, later on, did not stop short of proclaiming their adhesion to the National Independence of Sinn Féin were, even already, eager to follow Lord Dunraven in continuing the work of the Land Conference by a Home Rule Settlement conceived in the same spirit which had already given them the status of honoured citizenship in the pleasantest country



in the world. Mr. Redmond and myself had actually to interfere, not to stimulate but to moderate their pace, lest it should be charged that their "surrender" to Home Rule was their price for the handsome terms the Land Conference settlement was to yield to them.

The apprehensions and the religious rancour which, five or six years afterwards, were to constitute the Ulster Difficulty the most formidable of all stumbling-blocks to the unity and freedom of Ireland, had at that time no existence outside the most *arriéré* quarters of Belfast and the surrounding towns. Even there a new spirit was arising. Lord Dunraven and Captain Shawe-Taylor received a sympathetic welcome in the city where "six special trainsful of troops" could not in later days protect Mr. Winston Churchill from being obliged to fly for his life. They were heard without an interruption in the Ulster Hall, the future headquarters of the Provisional Government of the Covenanters. The Loyal Orange Institution itself was undergoing an internal reform, not to say revolution, which has strangely escaped the notice it deserved. An Independent Orange Order was established whose watchword—"Irishmen first of all!"—was its sufficient programme. The new Order came to a pitch of power at which it was able to organise vast rival processions of its own on "the Belfast Anniversaries." One of its leaders was Mr. Tom Sloane, who, as a Democrat, had won a seat in Parliament for Belfast, without the leave of the local Tory panjandrums, and commanded an enormous influence with the Protestant populace of that city as a religious zealot by his Sunday revivalist preachments from "the Custom-house steps." That I was paving the way for some traitorous "scratch alliance with Tom Sloane" (with whom, as it happened, I had never had the good fortune to exchange a word) came to be positively one of the most heinous of the charges thundered out against me by Mr. Dillon in his rabble-rousing days. The new



Order had produced a young leader of vastly greater capacity in Mr. Lindsay Crawford, who had inherited the finest of the National and tolerant traditions of the United Irishmen of the older day when Belfast was a fiery furnace of Irish revolutionary thought. Mournful to relate, it was the fate of Mr. Lindsay Crawford, as it was Wyndham's, to be compelled to quit the country, less by the force of Orange fanaticism than of Hibernian intrigue. He had to take refuge in Canada, where he carved out for himself a position of considerable distinction, and true to the last to the Independent Orange watchword, "Irishmen first of all!" is, at this writing, President of the Irish Self-Determination League of that great Dominion.

Lastly, be it remarked, Sir E. Carson—the only leader with the genius and daring that could have made Orangeism a power of the first political magnitude—had probably up to that time never set his foot within the Ulster border. He was a rather *effacé* English Solicitor-General, who, it is curiously forgotten, prophesied ruin and bankruptcy as a result of Wyndham's Purchase Act in as sepulchral terms as Mr. Dillon himself, and assuredly had then as little thought of becoming the ringleader of an Ulster Rebellion as of snatching the King's Crown off his Majesty's head and assuming it himself.

On the other hand, the Parliamentary Party and the Nationalist masses were as nearly unanimous as it is given to thinking men to be. Mr. Devlin had not yet emerged from the obscurity of his Debating Society on the Falls Road in Belfast and was little known outside save for a bitter local quarrel with his Bishop. The Secret Society of the Hibernian "Board of Erin" of which he became in after years the master and which in turn he caused to overmaster and absorb the public organisation of the United Irish League, had not yet gained a footing save in one or two corners



of the North, and was too insignificant to make any appeal to his ambitions. Singularly enough, the Hibernians who gradually assumed the function of accredited apostles of Catholicity and admitted no catechumen to the Order who did not make profession of the Catholic faith and pledge himself to frequent the Catholic sacraments, were themselves at the time we are speaking of under the ban of ecclesiastical censures and threats of excommunication. We were still far from the days when the Board of Erin erected far and wide a self-styled Catholic ascendancy which did more than all other causes to work up Protestant Ulster into an irreconcilable aversion to Home Rule. Nor did "the extreme men" present the slightest obstacle. It was not until two years later that Arthur Griffith was able to form the group of earnest young believers in his teachings into an almost unnoticed Sinn Féin organisation. They were not revolutionists but evolutionists. They were to the full as "constitutional" in their aims as the Parliamentary Party, and would never have developed to anything more dangerous than a Platonic aspiration for super-Parliamentary methods had not "the Party" fallen from one depth to a deeper of inefficiency and self-seeking. The Republicans had no vocal or organised existence at all. The youth of the country still found satisfaction for their most ardent aspirations in the triumphs of a Parnell movement conducted in the Parnell spirit and the most thrilling of those triumphs had only just been gained. They would have abhorred, if they could have conceived, the doctrines of religious disability which subsequently proposed to exclude the co-religionists of Parnell from equal participation in the tasks of Irish patriotism.

The trouble came, not from the bottom, but from the top. The more conscientiously the records of the time are searched, the clearer, I believe, must be the conclusion that, were it not for the revolt of



three or four leading Irish politicians against the "absolutely overwhelming" determination of the country (the words are Mr. Dillon's own), a Home Rule Settlement by consent must have been devised and passed into law with little more difficulty than the Land Conference Settlement, and with effects upon the stability and strength of our nation, and upon the ordered expansion of her liberties, for which, it is to be feared, children yet unborn will sigh in vain.

Here were all the materials (including the endorsement of 82 out of the 83 members who then composed the Irish Parliamentary Party) for an amalgamation of all the racial and denominational elements of the Irish Nation such as must have irresistibly effected its purpose without a trace of the hideous sectarian passions and political demoralization which were to disgrace the succeeding years—without the shedding of the smallest rivulet of the blood with which the country was to be drenched during the prolonged revolutionary war which was required in order to work out a remedy—must have effected a settlement, too, upon terms of moderation which can scarcely be recalled without a remorseful pang by the Prime Minister who was to welcome the chiefs of the Irish Republican Army to Downing Street upon practically their own terms.

How these propitious omens were cast to the winds and Parliamentary methods finally abandoned for the ruder ones of Revolution, it shall be the business of these pages to endeavour to make clear. In order to make all that is to follow comprehensible, let us first dispel the darkness in which one of the most fundamental realities of the case has hitherto been artfully enwrapped. The favourite device for deadening public interest in what was going on was the hardihood with which it was pretended there was no real difference in public policy between those who advocated the Policy of Conference and Conciliation and



its remorseless antagonists—nothing better worth serious public attention than the personal rivalries of politicians. Inasmuch as the bulk of the public was deprived of all means of listening to or reading our answer, the deceit was never fully found out until the final thunder crash, which did indeed awaken the Irish people from their infatuation sharply enough, but only to discover that the worst had already happened. It will be convenient to begin by giving the reader a birdseye view of those differences from which it may be judged how deeply the division cut into the most vital interests of the nation—how true it was that the chasm between the two policies was so profound and fateful as to make all the difference between a bloodless triumph for an United Ireland and the degradation and annihilation of the Parliamentary movement and the Partition of the country. And perhaps the bitterest drop of the water of gall which the nation was given to drink was that the Revolution was not the work of the Revolutionists but of those who were careful to describe themselves as “Constitutionalists.”

### I.

The root-difference was this: That, once the Abolition of Landlordism brought the main cause of class antagonism to an end, we saw the surest hope of the country's freedom in a combination of the most enlightened men of all its parties, creeds and schools of thought—our assailants, in the undivided authority and supremacy of the Irish Parliamentary Party and in that alone; we, in inviting and cherishing the united aid of all British Parties—they, in making the Irish Cause the appanage and monopoly of one particular British Party, the Liberal Party.

### II.

We looked for the extension of the Land Conference Agreement to a Home Rule Agreement as its



natural sequel—they persuaded themselves that the Land Conference Agreement, by reason of its very success, must lead to the destruction of the National Movement by divorcing a race of selfish peasant-proprietors from politics, and in that belief applied themselves to obstruct and frustrate the Agrarian Settlement itself, as a National misfortune, and to denounce as treason any extension of the Land Conference accord.<sup>1</sup>

### III.

We held with Parnell to independence of all British Parties as a first principle, while always ready to reciprocate good will on the part of either or both of them—our critics, in a fatal hour, accepted salaries and an enormous mass of patronage from the Liberal Government of Mr. Asquith and Mr. Lloyd George, thus enfeoffing themselves to that special band of British politicians, and committing themselves to follow their fortunes, even to the extent of joining them in the Partition of their country.

### IV.

The delusion was successfully propagated in Ireland and in England that Mr. Dillon represented the principles of “Unity” and “Majority Rule,” of which those of us who stood fast by the Land Conference Policy of Conciliation *plus* Business were the violators. The truth is directly the reverse. Nobody who investigates the facts can by any possibility

<sup>1</sup> The three distinguished Irishmen (only one of them a member of the Irish Party) who “launched a determined campaign” against the Policy of Conciliation, were not members of the Land Conference, owing to a mischance for which no member of the Conference was in the remotest degree responsible. It is impossible to imagine that, had they shared in its councils, they should ever have fallen victims to their infatuated misjudgment of its real objects and possibilities.



dispute that it was the self-constituted defenders of "Unity" and "Majority Rule" who themselves defied these principles and destroyed them. The Land Conference Policy was ratified by the entire body of the Irish Parliamentary Party, with the solitary exception of Mr. Dillon, and was adopted as the authorised National Policy "with substantial unanimity" (as the *Freeman* itself confessed) by the sovereign authority of the National Convention (from which Mr. Dillon of set design absented himself). In his first overt proposal for the repudiation of that Policy he could not find a seconder at the meeting of the Party. The only two men of consequence who joined in his "determined campaign" at the outset were Mr. Davitt, whose attitude as a fanatical Land Nationalizer every body made allowance for, and Mr. Sexton who had seven years previously withdrawn from the Party and from public life in a mood of disappointment and despair, and had only obtained his appointment as Business Director of the *Freeman's Journal* on an express public pledge that he would not interfere with the faithful support of the policy of the Irish Party in its pages. These gentlemen will not think of contesting that during more than six months, they carried on with the tremendous assistance of the Party's own official organ a bitter daily campaign with the avowed object of wrecking the Land Conference Settlement on grounds which are now universally acknowledged to have been wrong-headed and even childish—in open defiance of every representative authority in the Party and in the country, and in flagrant violation of those principles of "Unity" and "Majority Rule" in virtue of which they subsequently had the effrontery to claim the allegiance of the country. No sharper condemnation of Mr. Dillon's revolt could well be penned than his own admission in the last letter which to my keen regret was ever to pass between us : (11th February, 1903) : "Redmond



Harrington and you are at all events in a position to say that you have received from the country an absolutely overwhelming vote of confidence so far as your Conference proceedings go."

## V.

After the war upon those who had "received from the country an absolutely overwhelming vote of confidence" had gone on throughout the summer and autumn of 1903, while our plans were being laid for an experimental test of the new Purchase Act, I took a step about which doubtless controversy will long rage whether it was a weak surrender of an unassailable position, or a patriotic self-effacement as the only means of making a renewal of the horrors of the Parnell Split impossible. It was in any case an act of self-renunciation such as was never made before, and assuredly will never be made again by any Irish leader who studies how he who made it was rewarded. In November, 1903, I resigned my seat in Parliament and on the Directory of the United Irish League, which I had founded to put an end to the disunion caused by the Parnell Split and which for more than two years I had to carry on my own all but unassisted shoulders,<sup>1</sup> and in order

<sup>1</sup> This is the subject referred to in a letter dated December 29, 1920, from one whose judgment ought to carry more weight with Mr. Dillon than that of any other living man. Referring to the author's book, *Evening Memories*, which he characterises as a "wonderful and most fascinating book," the writer adds:

"It is, of course, quite beyond my knowledge and my capacity to criticise such a book. But one thing, I must say, I can't forgive in it, and that is the way in which one of the most astounding achievements of one man in history is merely referred to in a very few words as 'a miracle.' Saints can afford to make little of their miracles, but politicians should not—far less, writers of history. I allude, of course, to the most wonderful rescue of Ireland from eight years of unspeakable discord. Why, I find it is *not* even called a miracle, and the men who did not do it are referred to, not the man who did do it!"



to put an end to the last danger of perpetuating public controversy, I at the same time suppressed my own newspaper, *The Irish People*.

This step naturally created consternation among a public from whom I had up to the last moment striven to conceal the intolerable difficulties that were accumulating upon me, and who only saw (as Mr. Dillon confessed) that the country was "overwhelmingly" with me. Long after they had fallen under the control of Mr. Dillon, members of the Irish Party told me (what I very well knew) that, up to the moment of my resignation, the Party, all but an unimportant group, would have supported Mr. Redmond and myself in resolutely putting down the mutiny, if they had only known. They pathetically reproached me with having left them, like sheep without a shepherd, to fall a prey to the first comer. It was never doubtful that, had I chosen to distract the country with an open exposure of the conspiracy that was in progress, and met with and fought it outright, I could have spoken for ninety-ninths of the Nationalists of Ireland and of the Parliamentary Party (including their leader) in the conflict that must have followed. But, conflict there must have been, a fierce and unforgettable one, with its conquerors and conquered, and that was the whole question for one filled with abhorrence of the dissensions of the Parnell Split, the wounds from which were only just half-healing.

Those who, without a more intimate knowledge of what was going on, condemned my retirement as the principal mistake of my life (as, if it were only the tactics of a politician with an eye on his own future, it most obviously would be) forgot that the minority, numerically small though it was, included three distinguished Irishmen, enjoying a well-deserved popularity as patriots and a reputation for wisdom in the matter of Finance which events proved was not so well deserved. Reduced to silence, as they must



undoubtedly have been, it could only have been by a public exposure which would not quite get rid of an uneasy suspicion that they had suffered merely for an uncompromising hatred of Landlordism which was the most pardonable of crimes in Irish eyes, and the advantage sure to be taken of our intestine differences by unscrupulous landlords would dangerously compromise our plans for an equitable test of the Act, if not occasion its breakdown altogether. There was a fourth Irishman of more eminence still, under whose countenance their campaign against the Act would have been at that moment consecrated. The Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. Walsh—next to the famous Archbishop of Cashel Dr. Croke, the most potent patriot Churchman of his generation—had unhappily conceived the conviction that the Finances of the Act would prove unworkable, owing to his doubt that the Treasury could ever be got to consent to the Imperial Bonus on which the whole Land Conference scheme hinged. As soon as His Grace found that his apprehensions were unfounded and that the Imperial Bonus was forthcoming, he retired altogether from the controversy (as did also Michael Davitt long before his death) and in after years His Grace was one of the decisive factors in the overthrow of the degenerate Irish Party.<sup>1</sup> Dr. Walsh's initial doubts however

<sup>1</sup> It was never my privilege to meet Archbishop Walsh again, but shortly after his death I received a letter (dated April 26, 1921) from his Private Secretary (Rev. Fr. Patrick J. Walsh) which is highly relevant to the point we are discussing as a proof that His Grace's misunderstanding of the Act of 1903 had long been dismissed from his mind. It is quoted also to gratify a human feeling which, in the circumstances, may not be altogether unpardonable as evidence that he was never a party to the virulent misrepresentations subsequently heaped upon my name, and looked back with pleasure unalloyed upon "the memories of happier days" recorded in my book:

"There is a slight matter in connection with the late Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. Walsh, about which I think I ought to write to you. It concerns your latest volume, *Evening*



were at the moment a grievous addition to the difficulties of repressing the growing mutiny in our camp. The illness of Mr. Redmond's son and his own indolent habits of business, as well as the internal malady which was already undermining Lord Mayor Harrington's iron constitution, deprived me largely of their assistance in working out the plan of test cases resolved upon by the National Directory of the League. We were furthermore handicapped by the danger of explaining in public to the country our own confidential machinery for testing the Act, for fear of giving the insatiable section of the landlords a weapon against the tenants, while Mr. Dillon was free to incite the Convention in his own constituency to open repudiation of the plans of the Directory and Mr. Sexton was daily demonstrating in the *Freeman*—the recognised official organ, be it remembered, of the Party—that the Act demanded ruinous prices and that the tenants had only to boycott it altogether to obtain the land at  $13\frac{1}{2}$  years' purchase. The *Freeman* was meanwhile debauching public opinion by all the subtle arts of exaggeration or suppression within the power of a daily newspaper, displaying under scare headings the carefully organised resolutions which

*Memories.* This book was the last which His Grace read through before leaving here (Archbishop's House) for the Nursing Home in which he died a couple of weeks ago.

"For years it was the Archbishop's custom, when leaving his study at night to retire to his bedroom, to bring with him some book of interest which he would read before going to sleep. The evening that *Evening Memories* arrived, he brought the volume to his bedroom, and indeed to bed with him, and he found it so deeply interesting that he was unable to lay it down till the small hours of the morning. It brought back to him, very vividly, memories of happier days. The next night he took up the book again, determined that he would give up reading at a seasonable hour and go to sleep. But again, he was so excited and interested by the thrilling pages, that sleep was unduly curtailed.

"Accordingly, he had the volume brought down from his bedroom to the study, where he finished the reading of it."



were hawked about to the local representative Boards, assailing the National Policy under the plausible shelter of votes of thanks to Mr. Dillon and Mr. Davitt for their speeches, and ruthlessly mutilating such speeches of the members of Parliament deputed to the local Conventions as might have supplied adequate answers. While this demoralising process went on unchecked for months, the necessary silence of Mr. Redmond, Mr. Harrington and myself seemed to let judgment go against us by default.

But what is quite certain is that my withdrawal would never have been thought of, had Mr. Redmond been at the time in a position to exercise his authority as leader in a crisis in which his judgment and mine as to the highest interests of the nation were absolutely at one. By a woeful mischance, he was disabled at that very moment by private embarrassments arising out of the clamour set going against him in the *Freeman* on the report that he was demanding 24½ years' purchase for his own estate in Wexford. The allegation was, save for the price of one specially circumstanced farm, a cruelly slanderous one, but it contained that small modicum of truth which was grasped at by unscrupulous landlords as an excuse for demanding "24½ years' purchase—your own leader's price," and it created such an alarm and even panic in the country as paralyzed Mr. Redmond's liberty of action and endangered his continuance in the leadership. Preparations were actually in progress to refuse him a hearing on his visit to Limerick. I did not act without frank and constant communication of my views to Mr. Redmond. Thrice over I wrote urgent letters which were in after years published, impressing upon him how fast the infection was spreading in the Party and in the country; that it had not yet got so far that it would not promptly disappear if he would in the temperate and measured language of which he was a master apprise the country



that the National Policy again and again ratified by a practically unanimous Party and National Convention was in danger ; but that failing such a pronouncement from the only leader with authority to issue it, it would be no longer possible for me to undergo the insupportable strain upon my health and upon a temperament perhaps ultra-sensitive when the wounds came from those of our own household, of being compelled to stand silently by while the fruit of our labours was slowly rotting under our eyes ; and that my withdrawal altogether from the scene would be the only other means left of warning the country of the danger and of recalling the organizers of dissension to their senses. I ventured upon the prediction, which was promptly justified by events that my withdrawal would rally our assailants in a panic-stricken alarm to his support, and assured him of my own undiminished sympathy and good will in whatever course his new advisers might be prepared to recommend. His letters in reply were full of the friendliest and most anxious remonstrance and entreaty not to withdraw from the scene ; but as to the practical matters at issue he only pleaded that the farmers would pay no heed to the advice of the *Freeman* and that those responsible for the trouble would soon disappear from the country altogether : in a word, he was plainly intimidated, and would let the emergency take care of itself.

Mr. Dillon and the *Freeman* verified my anticipations by eager and violent protestations of their loyalty to Mr. Redmond against whom they had just been organising a Holy War in the *Freeman* ; but Mr. Dillon verified also the anticipations of Mr. Redmond as to his moral courage. Criticism when in opposition can only be justified by efficiency when in power. Far from being ready with any constructive plans of his own, when my retirement left him master of the situation, Mr. Dillon quitted the country in a panic,



leaving the Party derelict, dismantling our machinery for working the Act and throwing the farmers into a state of chaotic disorganisation, and he did not return to Ireland until after I had been prevailed upon to come back to their rescue. He returned then only to raise against me the incredibly base war-cry of "Unity!" and "Majority Rule!" with a temporary success as an electioneering trick, but a success which was to lead to the ultimate extinction of "the Party" and the destruction of Home Rule.

More contemptible still, if that were possible, was his imputation that it was all an affair of jealous competition on my part with Mr. Redmond for the leadership. The truth happens to be—and nobody had more cogent reason for knowing it than Mr. Dillon who set the calumny going—that Mr. Redmond pressed me earnestly to accept the Leadership of the Party when Parnell had offered it to me as the condition of his retirement in 1891, and that it was in favour of Mr. Dillon himself I rejected the proffer. Apart from any question of taste, that the insinuation should come from him, of all men, Mr. Dillon was listening when at meetings of the Party Mr. Redmond declared again and again that he was unreservedly in agreement with me in every particular up to the date of my withdrawal from public life, and wholly shared my belief in the National Policy for which he was every whit as responsible as I. Even in one of his public speeches, after my withdrawal, Mr. Redmond paid me the somewhat exaggerated compliment of saying that "but for Mr. William O'Brien there would have been no Land Conference and no Land Act." Some indication of the uninterrupted cordiality of our personal relations may be gathered from the fact that, four months after my retirement from Parliament, it was to me he turned for advice in the subjoined letter, when the men who had driven me out had no counsels to give him except those of sheer destructiveness.



“ House of Commons, 23—3—1904.

“ My dear O’Brien,—Notwithstanding all that has occurred, and our difference *on the subject of your resignation*, I am certain you are as anxious as ever to aid me in my difficult position. You could not do so more effectively than by giving me your views on the situation, in view of the coming Convention. Is there any practical way in which we can again close up our ranks by inducing you to rejoin the Party? I assure you I feel the position keenly and am fully alive to its dangers. Would any sort of private conference be of use? I hope your health is good. I need not say this note comes *from myself alone*. Very truly yours,

JOHN E. REDMOND.”

“ *From myself alone* ”—be it observed, without this time asking the leave of the new Hibernian turnkeys who had taken him under their protection. In my reply, full of heartfelt sympathy for Mr. Redmond’s difficulties, I concluded :

“ My own fixed belief is that so long as Dillon and Sexton continue in their present temper, no brave National programme requiring the loyal co-operation of responsible and patriotic men will have the ghost of a chance of succeeding during our generation. The first step towards any remedy for the situation is that they should be brought to realize the country’s sense of the immeasurable mischief they have wrought in destroying what will yet be recognised as the most glorious opportunity Ireland ever had for winning peace and freedom with the assent of all English and Irish parties. The excitement of a General Election and a change of Ministry will, no doubt, blind many unthinking people for a time, but a few years will bring the inevitable *désillusionnement* and break up.”

All this notwithstanding, the trick of shouting “ Unity ” and “ Majority Rule ” and “ a plot against our trusted leader,” succeeded in diverting attention



both in Ireland and in England from the vital issues at stake and for many years the men who never swerved an inch from the National Policy in which they only obeyed the mandate of every representative authority in the country, were merrily hounded down as the destroyers of National Unity by the very men who had succeeded in acquiring the control of the Party and of its leader by impudently trampling that principle under foot. The *columbae* were censured as factionists and traitors, and the *corvi* received the applause of the unfortunate nation for their clamorous cawings of "Unity!" and "Majority Rule!"

The student will find the narrative of the revolt against the National Policy of Conciliation *plus* Business (comprising the whole period from 1903 to 1910) and also of the circumstances under which I was compelled to return to Parliament under the affectionate coercion of a constituency faithful beyond any I have ever heard or read of, set forth in full detail in *An Olive-Branch in Ireland and its History*. (Macmillan, 1910).

The truthfulness of the record has never been impeached in a single particular and may, therefore, now be regarded as settled history.

Before passing from this part of the narrative, let us finish with another fiction which has almost become classic. It is a dogma with all pious believers, Liberal and Hibernian, that it was the Ulster Orange members, and not the Irish Party, who drove George Wyndham out of the Irish Secretaryship. The legend is an impudent falsification of the facts. The expulsion of Wyndham from the Irish Office before his benign work was half completed was the first exploit of the new masters of the Irish Party, and it was only the preliminary to their next achievement, which was to repeal his great Purchase Act of 1903. It was Mr. Dillon and his friends who alone had the power to do it, and it was they who did it.



Mr. T. P. O'Connor wept tears of ink over "The Passing of George Wyndham"—his passing from the Chief Secretaryship, and into his grave—and sang canticles over the great things he had done for Ireland and the greater things he might still have done, were it not for wicked men. The wicked men were, of course, the handful of Ulster Orange members, and to these Mr. T. P. O'Connor, without a wink in his scandalised eyes, attributed the entire guilt for the overthrow of Wyndham's career in Ireland. Never was hypocritical fable more easily confuted by the incontestable facts. It is quite true that the Orange Ulster Party did combine and conspire with Mr. T. P. O'Connor's Irish Party to harry Wyndham and to hang upon his flanks, until he was finally chased from the country—so much the deeper disgrace to both sets of conspirators. But it is true as well that the Irish Party, commanding 80 votes to the Orangemen's 14, and being in a position in addition to carry the whole Liberal Opposition into the voting lobbies with them, were incomparably the most powerful partners in the conspiracy. A brief summary of what really happened will, it is to be hoped, dispose once for all of the legend that it was the Orangemen who killed Cock Robin.

Before the Session of 1904 opened, Mr. Redmond announced that his Party held the Government of Wyndham as "prisoners in a condemned cell" waiting in fear and trembling for the execution of the sentence, and gave them notice that they would be "struck at as quickly and as strongly as we can." He lost no time in keeping his word.—On the 15th March, on a vote of censure moved by the Irish Party on the Education Vote, the Government was defeated by 141 votes to 130. Col. Saunderson and the other Ulster members—Messrs. Lonsdale, Gordon, Moore, Craig and Sloane—aided on this occasion by abstaining from voting for the Government.—On 22nd March,



the Irish Party moved another vote of censure on Wyndham (Arterial Drainage) in which they were joined in the division Lobby by the entire Ulster Party, Col. Saunderson declaring that "all Irish members were going to act together and fight what he called the Battle of the Bann"—On March 29th the Irish Party moved still another vote of censure on Wyndham (popular control of R.I.C.) but this time the Ulster Party voted with the Government.—On 3rd August Wyndham speaking on the University question, said the Government were accused of trifling with the question, but he pointed out that during the Session the Irish Party had joined in every attempt to turn out the Government. He appealed to the Party to think it out. (A Nationalist Member—"We want to turn you out")—In the Session of 1905, Mr. Redmond moved (20th February) an Amendment to the Address censuring the Government and was joined by Mr. William Moore (of the Orange Party) in a violent denunciation of Wyndham, which was followed up by a speech from Mr. Dillon bespattering Mr. Moore with his praises and reiterating the attacks upon Wyndham. Mr. C. Craig said they had been invited by the Nationalists to go into the lobby with them to show their indignation against the Government. As Unionists they could not do that, but they were so profoundly dissatisfied with the conduct of Irish affairs that it had been their intention to abstain from voting. Mr. Flavin (North Kerry)—I will win my cigars if you are going to vote with us to-night. Mr. Craig said he sincerely hoped he would win his cigars and if they could vote he would give the Hon. Member a few more.—A few months afterwards, Wyndham resigned.

Will anybody be ever again found bold enough to deny that it was the Irish Party who killed Wyndham as Chief Secretary in 1905, as surely as it was they who killed his great Purchase Act of 1903 by their own Act of 1909?



## VI.

To return to the comparison between the two Policies, if the second can be described as a policy which was merely the destruction of the first :—We from the start advocated, as every body advocates now, a special consideration for the apprehensions, and even the historic prejudices of our Protestant countrymen in Ulster, and in the other three provinces as well—our assailants scoffed at the Ulster Difficulty, and up to a late period joyously relied upon the weapons of contempt and ridicule to conjure it down, while the aid of the Southern Unionists was fiercely repulsed as though it covered some treacherous intrigue against the Home Rule Cause. Kindly Irishmen, of Unionist traditions, of the stamp of Lord Dunraven, Mr. Lindsay Talbot-Crosbie, Mr. Moreton Frewen, Lord Rossmore, and Col. (now Sir) W. Hutcheson Poe, who from cautious Home Rule beginnings advanced to the acceptance of full Dominion Home Rule, were vilified more and more savagely the further they advanced, as “landlord swindlers,” as “our hereditary enemies,” as “blackblooded Cromwellians,” and as crafty “anti-Irish conspirators,” to whom we had, “in a moment of weakness mortgaged the future of Ireland.”

## VII.

The folly of the anti-Conciliationists went further. They transformed the National Party and the National Movement into one from which not only all Unionists but all Protestants were excluded.—We proclaimed the first dogma of the Nationalist faith to be that the Protestant minority must not only be relieved from any imaginable danger to their religious or social liberties, but, on the one condition of their being “Irishmen first of all,” must be welcomed into the high places of honour and



power in an Irish nation of which the master-builders were the Protestant Grattans and Davises and Parnells. Our critics, on the contrary, proceeded to add fresh fuel to the flame of Orange fanaticism by subjecting the National movement to the new ascendancy of a sham Catholic secret society, with the result of changing the tepid suspicions of the most level headed of the Episcopalian and Presbyterian farmers and shopkeepers into sheer terror for the future of their children and themselves in an Hibernian-ridden Ireland.

It happened thus. There had of late years crept into the North of Ireland a seceding wing (calling itself "The Board of Erin") of the great American Antient Order of Hibernians, a genuine Benefit Society which had distinguished itself by many works of charity and benevolence. The seceding Board of Erin never offered any public explanation of the objects of their establishment in Ireland. Their work was carried on in secret, under an obligation equivalent to an oath, not to reveal their secrets and passwords; and nobody was admitted to membership who was not a Catholic, frequenting the Catholic Sacraments. Such a body would have been entirely harmless, if confined to the legitimate sphere of a Friendly Society; but suddenly and secretly established in control of the entire visible National organisation, the effect in Ulster was that of a brand flourished in a powder-magazine. The transformation was effected by a stealthy process without any consultation with or consent of the Party, the League, or the country, and indeed passed all but unnoticed until the operation was complete. The paid Secretary of the United Irish League (Mr. Joseph Devlin, of Belfast, who now for the first time came into prominence) became the National President of the Board of Erin;<sup>1</sup> the Standing Committee of the League was flooded with

<sup>1</sup> Better known in popular parlance as "The Mollies."



young members of Parliament who had taken their vows of secrecy on initiation into the Hibernian Order ; the paid organisers of the League were similarly initiated and were despatched through the country to turn the Branches into as many occult Hibernian Divisions at the expense of the United Irish League. The public organisation gradually ceased to exist save as a respectable means of collecting funds and passing resolutions hawked about by their secret masters and soon fell into contempt under the nickname of " The Resolutionists."

The Board of Erin Hibernians, who became thenceforth the real dispensers of all power and offices and titles, from 1906 to 1916, had every demerit that could inflame sectarian passion in Ulster : a secret society without any publicly avowed purpose ; a body so far from being authentically commissioned by the Catholic Church, that their initiatory ceremony was originally so near to blasphemy that it had to be dropped under threat of excommunication ; but none the less composed exclusively of Catholics pledged by a Sacramental Test. Into this sinister fraternity, now the undisputed masters and wirepullers of the public movement, no Protestant Irishman, were he the most illustrious in the history of our nation, was permitted to enter. The new disability and its Sacramental Test debased the National Ideal from the aim of Wolfe Tone—which was " to unite the whole people of Ireland, to abolish the memory of all past dissensions, and to substitute the common name of Irishman in place of the denominations of Protestant, Catholic and Dissenter"—to the level of a Catholic Orangeism in green paint, deformed by the same vices of monopoly and intolerance which had made Protestant Orangeism a National scourge. The results were catastrophic. Those who study the records of the time will not, I think, be able to escape from the conclusion that the uprising of the Board of Erin, which became for all



practical purposes the real Government of the country behind Mr. Birrell's genial mask, was a more effective instrument than Sir Edward Carson in organising the Covenanters of Ulster and in driving them to desperation and to arms. The ablest historian of the Sinn Féin movement, Professor Mitchell Henry, of Belfast, tells us :

"All sections of *Sinn Féin* as well as the Labour Party, saw in the Antient Order of Hibernians a menace to any prospect of an accommodation with Ulster. This strictly sectarian society, as sectarian and often as violent in its methods as the Orange Lodges, evoked their determined hostility."

What the leaders of the Insurrection of Easter Week thought on the subject is no less emphatic. Says Mr. Patrick H. Pearse, the most romantic of the Insurgent Chiefs, who was shot in Kilmainham Jail :

"The narrowing-down of Nationalism, by a job-getting organisation, to the members of one creed is the most fatal thing that has taken place in Ireland since the days of The Pope's Brass-band [a notorious crew of self-styled Catholic placehunters] "and is a silent practical riveting of sectarianism on the nation."

The judgment of Mr. James Connolly, a Labour leader of remarkable sagacity as well as bravery, who was also shot as the Commander of the Citizens' Army, is more unequivocal still :

"Were it not for the existence of the Board of Erin the Orange Society would long since have ceased to exist. To Brother Devlin, and not to Brother Carson, is mainly due the progress of the Covenanter Movement in Ulster."

This was the power which was henceforth to be the roguish voice of Jacob, while the hand continued to be the unwilling hand of Mr. Redmond. In its new phase of occultation, the Irish Party ceased to exist as the National Party of Parnell, and became the sham-Catholic Hibernian Party.



## VIII.

Pray let it be borne in mind that until this process of denaturalising the National Movement from top to bottom was all but completed, we started no organisation of our own, no Party of our own, no newspaper organ of our own. Even when at last, in 1910, the All-for-Ireland League came into existence, the sole claim it made was for liberty of speech while we submitted considerations like the above to the calm judgment of our countrymen, before it should be too late to undo the mischief. That modest claim was ruthlessly rejected by the Board of Erin. At the scene of infamous rowdyism known as "the Baton Convention," the protest we attempted to make against the repeal of the Land Purchase Act was one which it is certain every thinking man of the race now knows to have been a wise and patriotic one. That protest was nevertheless suppressed by means of revolvers and boxwood batons wielded by batonmen hired at 10/- a day, and by a Press boycott still more foul because it was more ingenious. "The Baton Convention" marked the death of free speech, as well as of Land Purchase. The smallest liberty of appeal to general public opinion, outside the limited area in the South, where violence durst not present its weapons, was smothered as truculently as it had been in the darkest days of English repression. No voice of free public opinion was allowed to be heard again until the Insurrection of 1916 suppressed the suppressors.

## IX.

Mark this thing, too. The men thus assaulted and gagged were still members of "the Party," which the country in its last exercise of liberty had recently obliged to renew its allegiance to our principles.



The All-for-Ireland League was not founded until the Treaty by which the Party was reunited in 1908 on the old platform of Conciliation had been shamelessly broken. The Treaty, which was the result of a Conference between Mr. Redmond and Most Rev. Dr. O'Donnall, Bishop of Raphoe, who represented the Party, and Father James Clancy, P.P., Carrigaholt, and myself who represented the Policy of Conciliation *plus* Business, bound the Party "cordially to welcome the co-operation of all classes and creeds willing to aid in the attainment" (among other great objects) "of the complete abolition of Landlordism." The test came when the Treasury, in order to recoup themselves for the losses of the Boer War by a beggarly economy at the expense of Ireland, proposed virtually to repeal the Act of 1903, under whose generous terms hundreds of thousands of tenants were hastening to purchase. The Treasury might have been and could only have been baffled by the common action between landlords and tenants to which the Party had pledged themselves by the Treaty of Reunion. Quite otherwise, in his infatuated hatred of the Act of 1903, Mr. Dillon hailed the Treasury Bill for its repeal with exultation, and induced the Party by a majority of 45 votes to 15<sup>1</sup> to repudiate their pledge to "welcome the co-operation" of the landlords against the perfidy of the Treasury and thereby gave the signal to the Board of Erin to strangle any further opposition by

<sup>1</sup> The names of the minority deserve to be recorded to the honour of their posterity:—Messrs. T. M. Healy (North Louth), T. C. Harrington (Dublin Harbour Division), Thomas O'Donnell (West Kerry), Edward Barry (South Cork), Conor O'Kelly (North Mayo), Eugene Crean (South-East Cork), George Murnaghan (Mid. Tyrone), James Gilhooly (West Cork), Patrick O'Doherty (North Donegal), William O'Brien (Cork City), John O'Donnell (South Mayo), H. Phillips (North Longford), Augustine Roche (Cork City), T. Smyth (South Leitrim), and D. D. Sheehan (Mid-Cork). Mr. Redmond did not open his lips on the occasion.



the incredible blackguardism of "The Baton Convention." Having thus torn to shreds the Treaty by which the Party had been reunited, Mr. Birrell was given a free field for passing the Act of 1909 by which Land Purchase was brought to a dead stop; over a hundred thousand tenants were for thirteen years and are up to the hour at which these pages are written, left groaning under the yoke of landlordism, and, most execrable trick of all, the Bonus of £20,000,000 voted by the glad assent of all Parties in 1903 as a Free Imperial gift, was turned into a debt due to the Treasury by the Irish Nation. These occurrences, men of honour will scarcely need to be told, rendered any further association on our part impossible with a Party so faithless to their word, and so guiltily responsible for a course of action which all the world now knows to have been fatal to the country's most sacred interests. What Mr. Dillon once boastingly said of himself: "I have been all my life a destructive politician," might serve for his mournful epitaph as a patriot.

## X.

The Liberal Party had returned into power in 1906 by the aid of the Irish vote, although the Liberal Leaders had pledged themselves beforehand not to introduce a Home Rule Bill in the forthcoming Parliament. Therein "the Party" probably acted wisely, but their support was a sufficient defence of Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman, if he found himself helpless to do anything better than bring in "the Irish Council Bill." He took care to make the compromise a bearable one by announcing it as "a measure consistent with and leading up to the larger policy" of full Home Rule. Furthermore, he was in a position to guarantee that the Bill would be passed in the



House of Lords ; that it would respect the integrity of Ireland ; that it would be subject to revision in five years, and if it worked harmoniously in the interim to expansion unlimited in extent. The effusive acceptance, and, after twenty-four hours, the ignoble destruction of that Bill by the Party which was now the Hibernian Party, was a tergiversation the effects of which upon the unity of Ireland are disastrously apparent enough to-day. The *Freeman* and the other Dublin newspapers which wrecked the Bill endeavoured to justify themselves by lyingly calling it “ the Irish *Councils*’ Bill,” and, in spite of repeated remonstrances, have ever since persisted in propagating the falsehood. It is the misdescription by one letter that makes all the difference. The prime merit of the Bill was that its true title was “ The Irish *Council* Bill ” and that it would have once for all fused Ulster with the rest of the country in an elective National Assembly, one and indivisible. On that ground I unhesitatingly faced unpopularity even among influential friends of our own, in supporting the Bill. So did Mr. Redmond, as long as his own judgment was unfettered. He and his Party went even so extravagantly far as to entertain the supposititious father of the Bill, Mr. Birrell, at dinner in the House of Commons, the night before they crossed over to Ireland to secure its adoption by the National Convention. When Mr. Redmond arrived in Dublin, it was to find that Mr. Devlin and his Board of Erin had for the first time shown their teeth in open revolt against their titular leader, and the unfortunate gentleman was obliged to submit to the degrading ordeal of himself moving the rejection of the Bill he had come over from London to bless. It is now obvious enough that, had the Irish Council Bill been allowed to pass, the Partition of Ireland would never have been heard of.



## XI.

With Mr. Asquith's Home Rule Bill of 1912 came the final assay of the Liberal Party and of their Hibernian allies. The Bill was one which would have offered an irresistible temptation to "faction" to hold no parley with a measure which proposed to reduce Ireland to the status of one of the backwoods Parliaments of the Canadian provinces and would leave her taxation absolutely at the mercy of the Westminster Chancellor of the Exchequer. And, unlike the Irish Council Bill which was to be a transient measure "consistent with and leading up to the larger policy," the Asquith Bill was to be "final" and was so accepted. Here again, perhaps, we erred by an excess of respect for the decisive, however uninformed, verdict of the country at the polls. The fact, at all events, is that the All-for-Ireland League, both at home and in the House of Commons, gave a loyal, if sober-minded, support to Mr. Asquith's Bill so long as it proposed to deal with an unpartitioned Ireland. But our support was extended to it as an instalment of Ireland's inalienable rights, while the Hibernian Party boisterously pledged themselves to accept it as a final settlement, even after, by their own consent to the surrender of the Six Counties, it had been transformed into an avowed Partition Bill.

In the handling of the Ulster Difficulty, two errors, from opposite extremes, were committed by the Liberal "Home Rule Government" and their Hibernian advisers. Long before the Covenanters thought of arming themselves, we proposed certain definite concessions to Ulster sentiment which will be found later on in this volume. They were all of them ignored. They were all of them later on proffered in a panic, when it was too late, capped by an additional concession, almost the only one which



in our eyes was an inadmissible and undiscussable surrender, viz., the separation of Ireland into two States. The Liberals and the Board of Erin set their faces against any concession at all at a stage when few who read Sir James Craig's recent speeches will doubt that Ulster might have been won over by a policy of "compulsory attraction" such as reconciled the landlords to the extinction of Landlordism. The wise men undertook to laugh Ulster out of court by cracking jokes at her spokesmen and making not over delicate fun of her "wooden guns."

That was their early manner; it was the error of short-sightedness and mere flippancy (as Mr. Lloyd George and Viscount Grey have since penitently owned). It was followed by the graver fault of sheer moral cowardice, as soon as the first mistake became visible to the world. The Government first truckled to the Board of Erin, and proceeded next to truckle to the Orangemen. Our advice, first of all and last of all, was to make an offer of abundantly and even superabundantly generous terms such as must reassure all rational men against any possibility of danger to their civil or religious liberties from a National Parliament. But our plea for liberal and ungrudging concessions was accompanied by no less outspoken advice in the event of all rational compromise being rejected by Ulster, or rather by the outlander Dublin lawyer who had by this time shouted himself into her confidence. Our second recommendation was that the Government, with their hands filled with these plentiful provisions for the minority, should manfully face the British electorate at a General Election and demand their authority to enforce the law of Parliament in the ordinary way against mere unreason and insane bigotry, or else challenge them to commission some other Government to drown in blood the aspirations of a world-wide Irish race for peace with England. The Liberal "Home Rule Government," most un-



happily, flew from one extreme of folly to the opposite. No sooner was the cargo of German rifles from the *Fanny* landed at Larne than the Liberals and Hibernians with equally long faces dropped their bantering of "the wooden gunmen," met the incipient mutiny at the Curragh Camp with obsequious apologies from the War Office to the mutineers, and shuddered at the thought of arresting and bringing to trial like common men Sir Edward Carson and the future Lord Chancellors and Privy Councillors who, with self-confessed illegality, were preaching armed resistance to the King's law to regiments of sworn Covenanters with German rifles in their hands. Worst of all, the feebleness of the Liberal Cabinet made the potential rebels irresistible by making no disguise of the fact that they had no notion of risking the shortening of their spell of office by challenging the verdict of a General Election. If Mr. Lloyd George is only just in now acknowledging us to have been "fundamentally right" in our way of dealing with Ulster, it seems to follow that he and his Liberal colleagues and his Hibernian counsellors were no less "fundamentally wrong," both in the unbending and in the shivering phases of their Ulster tactics. The boot was now on the other foot. It was the men of the German guns who were laughing, and it was the Home Rule Prime Minister who was mumbling "Wait and See!" Mr. Devlin claims the credit of having forbidden the Government to prosecute Sir Edward Carson; Mr. Asquith puts the blame on Mr. Redmond, who is dead. But there was no contradiction. Mr. Redmond was only Mr. Devlin in Court dress.

## XII.

Again the same trembling indecision on the outbreak of the War in 1914. Ireland's attitude in this crisis was misunderstood in England with such



ludicrous perversity that the Hibernians had little difficulty in persuading a guileless Parliament and public that it was certain incivilities of War Office officials towards Hibernian recruiting-sergeants that determined the failure of Mr. Redmond's war-policy. That was absurdly far from being the case. The true reason was that Mr. Redmond had no war-policy at all. Our own war programme may deserve praise or censure ; it was, at all events, unambiguous. We proposed an Irish contribution—substantial, but conditional—to the armies of the Allies. The proposition we submitted to Mr. Redmond at the entreaty of his most influential supporters in Cork was that he should take the initiative in summoning a Conference of Irish Unionists and Nationalists for the purpose of jointly recruiting an Irish Army Corps with its reserves for service on the Continent, upon a guarantee, which we were in a position to assure him the Irish Unionists would gladly give for themselves, and insist upon from a Coalition Government, for an agreed Home Rule settlement on the basis of a United Ireland. The raising of an Irish Army Corps happened to be what was named by the Prime Minister himself as an adequate contingent from Ireland and in our judgment, stronger now than ever, would have been rewarded with everlasting gratitude from England if offered in that hour of her peril. The proposal was contemptuously thrown aside by the Hibernian leaders, without (as we now know) going through the formality of consulting their Party, and without advancing any clear-cut alternative of their own.

But Mr. Redmond's famous War-speech, over which England almost wept for joy? The most foolish English member of Parliament who went into raptures over it then has only to read it now to know how absurdly he was hoaxed. It is not Mr. Redmond's sincerity that is impugned when he professed and truly felt fidelity to the Allies : it is that the titular leader



of the Hibernians was never more than the subconscious instrument of two or three men, whose judgment he profoundly mistrusted, but to whose tortuous ways, since (by this time) they represented "majority rule," he was bound to conform. He met the war-crisis with that characteristic mixture of high vision and unfirm purpose which at the same time exalted and enfeebled his character. His speech in the House of Commons, delirious as was the effect of its eloquence upon English nerves, strained at the moment as they had, perhaps, never been before, in reality misled England and Ireland alike, wobbling as it did between what sounded like a vehement promise of an Irish Army for Flanders, and what it really was—some cryptic undertaking to "defend the shores of Ireland" against what danger he forbore to specify, but in language which Young Ireland interpreted as a hint to keep their arms for home service—for what precise service or against what foe, they were left to divine for themselves. The attempt to ride the two horses disastrously broke down. It only raised the young Republicans, now dimly showing themselves, in revolt against the double-dealing of the Hibernians, while in the direction of aiding the Allies it got no further than a half-hearted recruiting campaign to raise an "Irish Brigade" (the absurd misnomer bestowed on the 16th Division) which, after spending its Irish blood in rivers, without much thanks either in England or in Ireland, wound up by being obliged to see its depleted ranks eked out by English recruits. The sacrifices of at least half-a-million soldiers of Irish blood, scattered through the various Allied armies, were allowed to go without reward or notice—with, indeed, much revilement of their motherland,—while the hints of a counter-policy of "defending the shores of Ireland" threw most young Irishmen worth their salt into the Republican camps to "wait and see."



## XIII.

The Hibernian Party who, be it remembered, still held the balance of power in the House of Commons and could have dismissed the Liberals from office when they pleased, forfeited their last claim to the allegiance of Irish Nationalists by, twice over, without a shred of authority from the country, agreeing to surrender to Sir E. Carson in the first instance four, and later (under cover of the War) six of the counties most famous in her history, in obedience to the exigencies of a Liberal "Home Rule Government" who had heretofore jibbed at the mildest suggestion of concessions to Ulster. The story of the surrender will be found for the first time fully revealed in this book.

The surrender of the Six Counties changed the traditions and prospects of the Irish National movement in an all but irreparable degree. Partition became thenceforward the sharpest dividing line of all between the Hibernians and the All-for-Irelanders. Consent to Partition came to be common ground amongst every other section of the House of Commons. A Partition Treaty sealed by the assenting votes of 75 out of 83 Nationalist representatives of Ireland proved to be Ulster's incontestable Magna Charta for the future. The final temperate protest of the All-for-Ireland group in the House of Commons was shouted down with yells of "Factionists!" and "Traitors!" by the triumphant Hibernian majority, and bonfires were lighted in Ireland in celebration of what was really the Partition "Act on the Statute-Book" by a guileless public who, if they were to construct bonfires a few years later, would only utilise them to cast "the Act on the Statute-Book" into the flames, where, indeed, it ultimately found its fate amidst the impartial contempt of all sides. Partition was all that remained of it. The claim of Sir E. Carson, thus



endorsed with the consent of the Hibernians, became so firmly fixed as a basis in all subsequent negotiations that, even after the Hibernian Party was dead and gone, the Republican plenipotentiaries who went to Downing St. in 1921, found themselves coerced to negotiate upon the recognition of that self-same separation of the Six Counties, from the responsibility for which the Hibernians will find no escape before the judgment-seat of History.

#### XIV.

Finally, Ireland's last opportunity was lost of extracting from the World-War emergency any tolerable Home Rule settlement by constitutional methods when, without a protesting word, the Hibernian Party consented to the destruction of the Liberal Home Rule Cabinet placed in power for the express purpose of "giving full self-government to Ireland," and the substitution in its place of a Coalition Cabinet in which Mr. Bonar Law, Sir E. Carson and Mr. F. E. Smith, the versatile English lawyer who trained for the Lord Chancellorship of England as "Galloper" at the Orange rebel reviews, became by far the most potent figures.

The inevitable followed, with the surefootedness of Nemesis. The Irish Republic arose to take up the power which the Irish Parliamentary Party had shamefully misused. The young men of Ireland, long chafing under the spectacle of incapacity in Parliament and venality at home, heard their hour of deliverance from the Hibernian nightmare strike when the World-War proclaimed new and giddy possibilities of Self-Determination for "the small nationalities." In an ecstasy of sacred madness, which makes the best men mad by their contagion, they rose up in the Easter Week of 1916 at the gates of Dublin Castle, and whatever else they failed to do—owing to their



cargo of German arms being less fortunate than Sir E. Carson's—brought the degenerate Parliamentary movement once for all to its ignoble ending. England also received the meet reward of her politicians' perfidy. In place of the amiable and all-too modest petitions for peace which the Irish race had spent forty years in tendering, and tendering in vain, to England, the flag of the Irish Republic was frankly run up by the new generation, and in a few years conquered its way to Downing Street.

It was by the stone-blindness of the confederate Liberal and Hibernian Parties the policy of an Irish settlement by consent was baffled throughout the years from 1903 to 1918, in any one of which, had there only been statesmanship at the helm, there might have been achieved a Peace Treaty which would have secured to Ireland all that the Treaty of 1921 gave her, and more, for the victory would have been achieved for an Undivided Ireland, not for a Partitioned Ireland, and it would have been achieved half a generation sooner and at less than one-thousandth part of the cost in blood and treasure. As the stern justice of things would have it, the two powerful Parties responsible for the mischief were, the one and the other, virtually annihilated at the polls in 1918, and the soul of Ireland was saved. With their disappearance stops the special function of this book, which is to elucidate the real causes of the Irish Revolution, and to restore events heretofore utterly distorted and falsified to their true perspective, in the light of waning years. There will be found in its pages documentary records of letters and interviews between the writer and Mr. Lloyd George, Mr. Bonar Law, Sir E. Carson, Sir Henry Duke, Mr. Arthur Griffith, Mr. De Valera, Lord Dunraven, Lord Northcliffe, Mr. William Martin Murphy and others. My communications with Ministers, it will be observed, took place invariably on the initiative of Ministers, and only began



after the Rising of Easter Week, when Mr. Lloyd George conceived his first fantastic scheme (never, until now, I think, publicly heard of) for an Irish Provisional Government to be immediately established.

His object in inviting, only at that particular stage, counsels heretofore rejected with the cynicism of the politician who has to choose between the views of a Party of Seven, as opposed to those of a Party of Seventy, was, I am afraid, scarcely to be mistaken. The Party of Seventy had miserably foundered in the storm of Easter Week. The Ministerial hope too obviously was that the respect in which our doctrines were known to be held by a powerful and unpurchaseable section of the young men who had not yet quite gone over to the Republic, and by a considerable section of those who had,<sup>1</sup> might still give me influence enough to patch up some semblance of peace in a country subdued, but far from subjugated, by Martial Law. In this connection, the message from "an influential member of the Cabinet" intimating—"I know so much more than O'B. can know of the North East people. I know how hard and almost impossible it is for them to confer with R. or he with them. O'B. has got very near the Northerns. He, if any one, can bridge the last gap." is, also, not to be lost sight of.

<sup>1</sup> A partly amusing and wholly pathetic piece of evidence in proof was what happened on the occasion of my last public speech in Cork, on June 24, 1916, to protest against Partition. A young, but energetic, minority of my audience succeeded in preventing me from obtaining a hearing by chorussing "The Soldier's Song," the newly-composed war-song of the Republicans. They several times suspended the disorder, while their leaders (one of whom was afterwards shot dead at Ballykinlar Camp) came on the platform to announce that their refusal of a hearing was not through any personal disrespect or failure of affection for me, but to express their dissent from my attitude in the War, and that solely because I was the only man who had the power of winning honest Nationalists back to a Parliamentary movement which was otherwise dead and rotten. They suspended hostilities again, to agree with one voice to a resolution against Partition, but instantly recommenced "The Soldier's Song," and would listen to no more.



This particular scheme had the brilliancy of all Mr. Lloyd George's improvisations, but it had, too, the defect that rendered most of his brilliant improvisations void—a brilliancy without knowledge. The awakening of the British politicians came too late. The suggestion of a Provisional Government, in which apparently All-for-Irelanders and Ulster Unionists were to act in concert, might at one time have done wonders to produce a united Ireland; but the mad notion of Mr. Healy and myself joining Sir E. Carson and Mr. Redmond, on the morrow of the Insurrection, in a Cabinet founded upon Mr. Redmond's expression of "horror and detestation" of the Insurgents, while their lives were trembling in the balance, and upon Sir E. Carson's offer to co-operate with him in "putting down these rebels for evermore"—the rebels in whose glorious unselfishness we saw the one gleam of hope for the salvation of Ireland from the politicians—was a conception that could only have occurred to the inmate of a padded cell—or to a British Minister addressing himself to Irish affairs. In my second interview with Mr. Lloyd George, at which Sir E. Carson was present, he had already abandoned the March hare he had started; the Provisional Government was no longer mentioned, and my own suggestion of the only emollient policy at that moment practicable was ignored with the old self-complacent fatuity. The reader will be able to study, documents in hand, a good deal of the secret history of the next Irish project of Mr. Lloyd George's fertile brain—his "Irish Convention" of 1917—which seemed to catch at the solution we had been all along advocating, but adopted it only in a form that made its failure unavoidable. The Convention's only real achievement was the downfall of Mr. Redmond and his pathetic death.

So long as there was left the stump of a sword in our hands, we thought it a duty to struggle on,



endeavouring to reconcile the Coalition Government to measures of a very different character which, after years of bloody travail, they were destined to submit to, without gratitude from Ireland and without deserving it. Not the least instructive of those communications was my last correspondence with the Prime Minister in July, 1919, when he spurned the all but certain prospect of peace with the most redoubtable of the Insurgent leaders—one under whose feet he was happy enough later on to spread his softest carpets as his visitor in Downing Street. Mr. De Valera more than three years afterwards told me “he had been all along in favour of peace with England, and at one time he could have carried it all right, if Lloyd George placed him in a position to offer the young men a measure of National Independence for the whole country upon some reasonable terms of External Association.” Once more ugly shadows obscured the bright lights of Mr. Lloyd George’s intellect. The reader will, I am afraid, find it painfully evident that Mr. De Valera’s reasonableness at the zenith of his power was despised because the assumption had not yet been flogged out of the British politician mind, that the Irish leader must be already a beaten and broken man when he began to tolerate the notion of an accomodation with England.

The truth is that in neither country had Parliamentarianism in any shape a chance any longer. Once it was made clear that it had become impossible to obtain an official hearing, on either side of the Irish Sea, for remedies whose days of efficacy had passed away, all that remained for us of the All-for-Ireland League to do was to blot ourselves out, unequivocally and entirely, from the controversy in order to leave a freehand to those of a new generation who had resolved to have done with an outworn and decomposing Parliamentarianism altogether. They had already done Ireland three precious services which they alone had the necessary strength to do. It was they



who had defeated Conscription ; it was they who had dethroned the squalid sham-Catholic Ascendancy which was reducing the National Ideal to something scarcely distinguishable from Orangeism, except that the war-whoop : "To h—— wi' the Pup !" was replaced by the scarcely chaster one of "Up the Mollies !" Better than all, it was they who had delivered Irish public life from conditions in which the price of Partition had been paid to gratify the greed for places, emoluments and titles for which an eminent Irish ecclesiastic and man of letters<sup>1</sup> could find no suaver description than "putrefaction." It was the youth of Ireland, by their purity of purpose, and their all but superhuman readiness—nay, enthusiasm—for death in a holy cause, who had the glory, in a three years' war in which the odds counted a thousand to one against them, of expelling every vestige of English rule from Dublin Castle, and from three-fourths of the country, where the squeezability of Irish politicians and the faithlessness of British ones had made havoc of more moderate demands and gentler methods. In that attitude of unmeddling and uncaptious fairplay towards those upon whose shoulders the burden of the nation's fortunes had now fallen, we have persisted loyally to the last. A history of the romantic war by which the day was gained against Satanic powers and barbarities scarcely to be imagined—gained, it must never be forgotten, with the succour of all that was noblest in the civilization of Britain—must be the work of some younger and more fully-informed pen.

The present narrative stops with the Truce of July 11, 1921. All that has occurred since can only be dispassionately judged whenever the course of the

<sup>1</sup> The late Canon Sheehan, Parish Priest of Doneraile, whose last novel, *The Graves at Kilmorna*, predicted the ruin of the Parliamentary movement with the dread certainty of a Biblical Prophet.



secret negotiations which ended in the signing of the Treaty of Downing Street on the night of December 5-6, 1921, comes to be revealed. But to those who can find nothing but Irish incorrigibility in the tragedies that followed while the merits or demerits of the Treaty were debated in a murderous Civil War between the comrades who had come off victorious over the militarism of aliens, certain observations have to be made, if the lessons taught by this book are not to be neglected anew in the coming time.

The first is: the sins of the Irish Revolution are primarily the sins of those who, in Ireland and in Westminster, made the Revolution a necessity. If bloodshed and chaos lurk in the train of all armed uprisings for Liberty, however nobly planned, of such are the pangs and travail of which nations are born or re-born. The aid of Revolution, once invoked, almost everywhere exacts its penalties in similar, and often incomparably worse, scenes of agony and shame. The United States themselves—the soberest of Revolutionists—did not think four years of a devastating Civil War and the sacrifice of a million of lives an excessive price to pay for their National Unity in what was really a war against Partition. And it may put some check on England's propensity to sermonize her neighbours if she will only remember that her sympathies were with the Partitionist rebels in the American Civil War, as they were, and, I am afraid, are, with the Partitionist rebels of Ulster. She must really not be over-scandalized if the process of casting her out from Ireland has produced agonies in the half-delivered country more acute than when the evil spirit of English rule wholly possessed our nation.

Those of us who have lived long enough to realize that the Absolute of the Idealist can have no existence in this perverse world, will not grudge a



large indulgence to negotiators who, in circumstances of cruel difficulty and under pressure of not very creditable threats, acted on the injunction of Cardinal de Retz that the function of a statesman is to make a good choice between grave inconveniences. It would, however, be foolish of people in England, and still more foolish of people in Ireland, to blind their eyes to the fact that there are objections to the Treaty deeper and more likely to endure than those of the visionaries. It is simply not true that the Irish Free State is the embodiment of "Ireland a Nation." The Irish Free State is not a Free State of Ireland at all, but a very different thing. It is only one of two Irish States, and of two States expressly carved out to be hostile States in race and creed. The existence of an Irish Papist was not recognized by law in the Penal Ages. The very name of Ireland as a unit has ceased to exist in law under the Statute which deliberately substitutes "Northern Ireland" and "Southern Ireland" as the legal designations of the two rival States.

We are plied with the consolation that the liberty accorded to Ireland is Canadian Home Rule. Again, it is simply not the truth. The Home Rule of the Irish Free State is what Canadian Home Rule would be, if the province of Quebec were separated from the Dominion, and annexed to France or to the United States, and if, moreover, Canada were subjected to a compulsory Imperial contribution, and aggressively stripped of the right of Secession. England remains in possession of an English Pale richer and more populous than she was able to maintain from the twelfth to the seventeenth century. And for the much advertised "British evacuation of Ireland," England retains within the seas of Ireland an army powerful enough to reoccupy Dublin within a week. The graves of St. Patrick and St. Brigid, and of the last of the High Kings of Ireland—the



Derry of St. Colmcille—the Armagh palaces of the Red Branch Knights of Irish chivalry—the most glorious battlefields of Ireland's history from Blackwater and Benburb to Antrim Fight—the church of the Dungannon Convention—the Cave Hill of Wolfe Tone's United Men—have all become conquered territory and foreign soil.

Affronts like these to the most cherished sentiment of a nation older than any in Europe are not to be got rid of by printing the Northern Ireland and the Southern Ireland of the British Statute Book within sarcastic "quotation marks" in our newspapers. The Treaty is a compromise, and in one respect an all but fatal compromise. Where, in our design, the varied tints of universal Ireland might have been united, rainbow-wise, to form one arch of peace, there are left, in place of one dissentient minority, three new minorities smarting under memories which it may take many years of healing patriotism to render supportable. Within the Six Counties, the Catholic minority already count their martyred dead by the thousand and their ravaged homes by tens of thousands. The Unionist minority in the South, who, had they accepted Home Rule as frankly in 1912 as they have done in 1921, might be figuring by this time amongst the foremost leaders of their countrymen, have been obliged to put up with sufferings of their own which, although immeasurably fewer than those of the Catholics of the North, are none the less cruel and detestable. Pray Heaven that certain abominations of the Civil War of 1922, from the responsibility for which neither side is free, may not finish by creating and perpetuating a Republican Minority still more dangerously discontented! Until some way can be found out of these complexities it would be wicked to flatter England into the delusion that she will not still be pursued and haunted by the disaffection of an *Irlanda Irredenta*.



For all that, there is no more reassuring proof of the prodigious advances made by the Irish Cause than the difficulty of getting the Republican youth to form a tolerant estimate of the amazing powers and liberties which the Treaty, with all its limitations, does indisputably embody. Its one organic vice is not so much the fault of the Sinn Féin negotiators as of the Hibernian negotiators who preceded them and fettered their hands. It cannot be beyond the compass of an enlightened patriotism to find a happy solution of these difficulties within the country and between the two countries, and that not by the rude hand of armed Revolution, but by unwearying good humour and by a magnanimity towards minorities that will take no rebuffs.

But three things seem to my poor vision to be essential things: (1) The old "loyalist" minority, inside and outside the Six Counties, must have their apprehensions allayed in that spirit of conciliatory tenderness, allied with quiet firmness of purpose, of which the nominations to the Free State Senate have given a substantial guarantee. (2) Love of Ireland must not be confounded with an insane hatred of England—the England of actual life. There must be a generous recognition of the extent to which the masses of the British people have come to a deep heart on the subject of their relations with Ireland. Self-interest, no less than our finer instincts, counsels us to understand and appreciate the supreme fact that nothing short of some intolerable aggression on our own part will henceforth tempt the honest common people of Britain to undertake the armed reconquest of Ireland. (3) Before and above every other consideration whatsoever, I would place the condition that means must be found of reconciling and restoring good comradeship among those portions of the two armies of the Civil War who were comrades in a nobler war up to the Truce of July



11, 1921. Nobody is more acutely sensible than I how trying to their elders often enough are those Republican youngsters who, in their passionate devotion to the soul of Ireland, are apt to forget that there is also a body of Ireland which has some rights in the partnership. It is Tourguénief's everlasting incompatibility of "Fathers and Sons"—of the greyheads who cannot help knowing and the adolescents who need nothing but faith in their own bright imaginings. Nevertheless, fortunate is the nation the worst reproach of whose youth is the excess of spirituality and self-renunciation which impelled them, in the face of a terrorism that made the strong men stagger, to pluck up the Irish Cause out of the pit of corruption and disaster into which the "Constitutional" politicians, Irish and British, had sunk it. Unnatural, indeed, would be the Irishman who would not suffer injuries at their hands in silence—who would not extend an infinite indulgence even to their unreason—rather than find any comfort in seeing the young founders of our liberties hunted down and put to death, or traduced as the scum of the earth, by their own ungrateful countrymen.

It is too soon to say more with any confidence, excepting this : Amidst the gloom which hangs over our country as heavily as a funeral pall, while these pages are written, there shines forth one consolation of immortal efficacy—we can never permanently lose anything we have won (and we have won many and marvellous things) ; and whatever remains will of a certainty be added unto us—it may be through the mediation of the League of Nations, to whose council board Ireland will now have free access—not, in any case, we may pray, through any new recourse to the barbarities of armed Revolution, but through the wise exercise of the powers which the Revolution was needed in order to place within our reach. For



which reason, however our hearts are saddened by the smoking monuments all around us of the existing war of fratricides, the story of the earlier and united struggle of the pre-Truce days will for centuries still in the womb of time kindle in the soul of Ireland a pride in her young men and an unconquerable faith that what they did highly and holily then, they will be found capable of doing again at need, so long as the ocean breaks against our irremovable landmarks as a Nation.



## CHAPTER I

HOW THE ALL-FOR-IRELAND LEAGUE BECAME A NECESSITY  
(1910)

THE All-for-Ireland League was founded on March 31, 1910. For seven years after the revolt of Mr. Dillon and the *Freeman* against the authorized National Policy in 1903 we had struggled on as best we might without any separate national organization of our own and in the face of a hostile Press which prevented the greater part of the country from reading anything except monstrous misrepresentations of our arguments, so far as our words were not suppressed altogether. We did so in the hope that the incapacity of the revolvers to produce any practical policy of their own and the amazing progress of the abolition of landlordism in those counties where our advice had been followed would gradually influence "The Party" to return to the Policy of appeasement to which they had, with a single exception, pledged themselves in 1903. Public opinion did, in fact, compel "The Party" to accept, with a few verbal alterations, the conditions which I suggested in a speech in Wexford in 1907 as those on which the Party might be reunited, and these conditions, embodied in a formal Treaty at the Mansion House Conference at which Mr. Redmond and Bishop O'Donnell acted on the one part and Father James Clancy and myself on the other, beyond all question re-pledged the Party "cordially to welcome that co-operation of Irishmen of all classes and creeds" which was the essence of the National Policy of 1903. Had that reunion been



followed up in true democratic fashion, by referring the Treaty to a National Convention, for endorsement or otherwise, nobody was in less doubt than Mr. Dillon that the reunion would have become a genuine one from which no factionist would henceforth dare to break away.

His successful opposition to the holding of a National Convention was the first symptom of how he regarded the Treaty to which he submitted without one gracious word. He and his followers next proceeded, at a private meeting of the Party, to violate the Treaty in its essence, by voting down by 42 votes to 15 a proposal to welcome the co-operation of the landlord organization in defeating the Treasury Bill by which the great Act of 1903 was eventually repealed and Land Purchase killed. Once more—his necessities, not his will, consenting—Mr. Redmond sat silent in the chair while the Treaty, to which his was the first signature, was torn to tatters under his eyes. Mr. Dillon's next step, in his new campaign of disruption, was to direct Mr. Asquith and Mr. Birrell—as the most charitable must conclude it was he alone who could have directed them—to refuse upon an infantile pretext to receive the most representative deputation who ever went out of Munster—a deputation representing the united strength of the landlord and tenant class, of the members of Parliament and elective Councils of the South—the very incarnation of that co-operation of Irishmen of all ranks and religious professions which the Treaty of Reunion declared to be the best hope of the nation. Even that elementary constitutional right of remonstrance with the Government who were planning the destruction of Land Purchase must be denied with insult to the representatives of the people by a Home Rule Prime Minister who was at the same moment giving an effusive hearing to a deputation from the Scottish liquor trade on



the subject of the whiskey duties. Violation number two of the Treaty of Reunion on which Mr. Healy and myself and five of our colleagues had been fraudulently lured back to the Party.

My growing feeling that it was no longer possible to remain associated with a Party so faithless to the nation and to their colleagues was decided once for all by the infamous extinction of free speech at "The Baton Convention" (February 9, 1909). The question to be debated was nothing less than whether the English Treasury was to be relieved from the most favourable financial bargain ever secured for Ireland, and relieved by the connivance, and even by the votes, of Ireland's own representatives. Upon a question of the first magnitude such as this freedom of speech was crushed with the strong hand by a band of Hibernians, armed with revolvers, who were imported by special train from Belfast, and marched to the Mansion House in military order, where they took possession of every approach to the Convention Hall, while the interior of the Hall was occupied by another force of batonmen, paid 10s. a day for their services, who were armed with boxwood batons of the type used by the police, attached to the wrists of the men who wielded them by leathern thongs. Two-thirds of the assembly even as sifted through the Hibernian turnstiles were honest agriculturists eager to hear both sides of a debate on which the hope of emancipation of hundreds of thousands of their class was hanging. The others were, to put it bluntly, armed ruffians, town-bred and knowing no more of the merits or demerits of the Birrell Repealing Bill under discussion than most of us do of the laws of relativity. Their job was to prevent one connected sentence from any opponent of the Birrell Bill reaching the straining ears of the assembly in general, and this they did by the yells of savages, and where the yells did not suffice, by



swinging their batons and producing their revolvers and assaulting everybody "with a Cork accent" who made bold to utter a word of remonstrance. By enlightened methods such as these, they stifled almost every syllable of a speech from myself which, it is quite safe to say, would now be read by all disinterested Irishmen as an argument of common-sense so obvious as to be commonplace and as a forewarning of the national misfortune which has since slain Land Purchase by Irish hands. My amendment was: "That any Bill based on the lines of the Birrell Land Bill of last Session must lead to the stoppage of Land Purchase for an indefinite number of years in the interest of the British Treasury and impose an intolerable yearly penalty upon those tenant-purchasers whose purchase money the Treasury has failed to provide." I wonder if even the rudest of the disturbers at the Baton Convention or of their employers could now read that amendment without a pang of remorse.

My observations pointing out how easily the Treasury Bill might even still be defeated by that "co-operation of Irishmen of all classes and creeds to complete the abolition of Landlordism," which the Party had in solemn words pledged themselves "cordially to welcome" as the condition of the Reunion, were received with still more ferocity when seconded by Father James Clancy, my colleague at the Conference by which the Treaty of Reunion, now cast to the winds, was subscribed by Mr. Redmond and his Party under every condition that could bind men of honour. The arrival of Mr. Healy on the platform was the final signal for closing instantly, and amidst a scene of deafening confusion a debate in which not a single sentence of protest was suffered to be heard against the English Treasury Bill. Its nominal adoption by the Baton



Convention sentenced over a hundred thousand Irish tenants from that day to this to servitude in the toils of landlordism in order to enable the English Treasury to realise a dishonest economy and to gratify the spleen of two or three politicians against the Land Conference and against the Wyndham Act of 1903 which was its fruit.<sup>1</sup> If the Hibernian Party committed no other evil deed against Ireland, students of the record of the Baton Convention will, I think, agree that the foul business was in itself sufficient to make its organizers worthy politically to die the death, and will only wonder how the execution of the sentence could have been so long delayed.

My withdrawal from the Party and from Parliament followed the Baton Convention. My dislike—to it might with truth be said aversion—to Parliamentary life went to unreasonable lengths, but it was ineradicable. The feeling was deepened to a point almost beyond bearing by recent contact with the meannesses which, I suppose, infest the underworld of politics in every country. But by a curious turn of destiny, it took me more time and

<sup>1</sup> From this censure I desire expressly to exclude Mr. Davitt. His faith was in nationalization of the land, and his opposition to the Wyndham Act, or to any other scheme of peasant proprietary, was consistent and perfectly legitimate. It has always been a consolation to me to remember that in all those years of controversy no word personally hurtful to Mr. Davitt has ever escaped me. His last letter to me upon a private matter shortly before his death was as full of manly friendship as if nothing had happened since the period of loyal comradeship he and I spent together during the hard years when the United Irish League was being formed out of the ruins of the National movement. Nobody with any intimate knowledge of Mr. Davitt will doubt that had he been alive at the time of the Baton Convention he would have forbidden with indignation the preparations for that orgy of violence or would have separated himself with loathing from its organizers.



pains to secure my escape for good from the English Parliament than it takes (and legitimately takes) the average British citizen to gain admission to it; and this time again the one thing unforeseeable happened to drag me miserably back. Before retiring in shattered health to Florence, where I spent the next nine months without seeing an Irish paper, I had implored my friends in Cork to put a summary end to all controversy by accepting in my place any candidate the Hibernian Party might please to nominate, and had specially enjoined the fifteen Parliamentary colleagues who shared my views to make no further protest that could trouble the smooth working of the Party. A very little tact, not to say decent feeling, on the part of the triumphant Party managers, would have delivered them from any further anxiety.

Their notion of tact was to press on the people of Cork the candidate of all others who was most offensive to the majority of them, and because he was the most offensive—Mr. George Crosbie, the owner of the *Cork Examiner*, who had gone over with his paper to the Hibernians and turned its guns with all the renegade's zeal against the policy and the men he believed in, so far as genuine patriotic belief he had any.<sup>1</sup> It was too severe a trial for poor human nature. The people of Cork

<sup>1</sup> The true character of Mr. Crosbie's change of faith may be judged by the not very delicate cynicism of a remark of his to myself while the *Examiner* was still unperverted. "The only possible objection I can see to your policy," he said, "is that it is so obviously common sense and common sense never has a chance in Ireland." The punishment which eventually overtook Mr. Crosbie was an unwarrantable and tyrannous one in itself, but was only a rougher form of the foul play and tyranny he had himself practised against the friends he deserted. During the Civil War of 1922 he was obliged to kneel daily at the feet of Miss Mary MacSwiney, T.D., to receive her orders as Military Censor in his editorial chair. He meekly announced: "The Republican



insisted on rejecting the renegade and elected Mr. Maurice Healy, a man remarkable for his sobriety of judgment and of first-rate intellectual rank, who had not for years interfered in any public controversy, and had no objection to taking the pledge to act faithfully with the Party. With an insolent folly for which even the Baton Convention had not prepared the public, the Party Managers refused to admit to the Party the elected representative of the people of Cork, and from that day forth addressed themselves with all their might to undermine in their constituencies the members of the Conciliationist Minority, who still remained in the Party, to organize their expulsion from public life at the approaching General Election, and in the meantime to starve them out by

authorities wish us to state their censorship is merely for the purpose of securing impartial reports." After his own performances for years in publishing grossly garbled reports of All-for-Ireland speeches or boycotting them entirely, it was indeed edifying that he should be brought to realize the virtues of "impartial reports." However, the "impartial reports" he was under the penitential necessity of publishing during the Republican supremacy took the shape of four or five columns every day of Republican leading articles levelling charges of traitorism and murder against Mr. Arthur Griffith and General Michael Collins and trouncing the Bishops and priests in terms that might well have made the respectable founder of the *Cork Examiner* shudder in his grave. Doubtless in his new apostacy the worthy gentleman found some consolation in another of his favourite apothegms: "The most interesting thing I can find to read in the *Examiner* is the agents' books." The circulation must have been brisk during the Republican *interregnum*, for the good reason, if there was no other, that it was the only newspaper left in existence. The only other local daily, the *Constitution*, like the fine old Tory that it was, preferred to die rather than follow the example of its contemporary. Needless to add, no sooner was Miss Mary MacSwiney replaced by the Military Censor of the Free State, than the *Examiner*, true to its patriotic repute as *le domestique de tous les pouvoirs*—the humble servant of everybody who comes out on top—rushed to the rescue of the conquerors and proceeded to pour out no less vigorous abuse upon its late editorial contributors in their retreat.



cutting off their Parliamentary indemnity from the National Funds—an indemnity to which the humblest member of the Party had, according to the terms on which the Funds had been collected, as just a title as Mr. Redmond or Mr. Devlin. It was not pretended that any one of these men contemplated revolt against the sternest discipline of the Party. They voted steadily with the Hibernian majority for the Birrell Bill, well though they knew the result must be the destruction of Land Purchase, but knew also that it was not they, but the Hibernian majority, who were the violators of the Treaty of Reunion which pledged the entire Party to an opposite course. The Board of Erin used their power without pity, and their victims, as it seemed, had no friends. It was not merely against my more intimate friends their thumbs were turned down; every member of the minority who had voted for the observance of the Treaty of Reunion, even Mr. Tim Harrington, the Lord Mayor of Dublin—one of the foremost of nation-builders all his lifetime, now a stricken veteran in ruined health—was threatened in his own constituency in Dublin, solely because he had declined, as one of the members of the Land Conference, to recant principles to which he had, most inoffensively but steadfastly, held true. The constituencies of all the rest of the minority were flooded with Hibernian organizers, the people plied with calumnious whispers, and with ready-made resolutions of censure, and every appetite of corruption was set on edge for the innumerable jobs and dignities, the disposal of which was the only advantage the Party had been able to gain for Ireland during the first Parliament of the Liberal Ministry.

As the General Election approached, it was the anguish of hearing such news poured into my ears by faithful and self-sacrificing Irishmen, now defenceless, without organization or funds against



their cruel enemies, which forced me and alone could have forced me to turn my eyes again to Irish affairs. I pointed out in vain to my correspondents in Ireland that any permanent cure must be a more radical one. The gradual discovery how the people had been tricked into the destruction of Land Purchase—the one sinister legislative achievement of “The Party”—was changing the public feeling from trustfulness to indignation, while the dozens of squalid family quarrels over the seats of the doomed members were spreading demoralization and decay by a process which had only to be allowed to proceed to bring the whole sordid tyranny to its appointed end. My return to the scene would, as had happened before, only give the Board of Erin a further respite by enabling them to turn away the attention of the country from their own dissensions by raising anew their odious sham battle-cries of “Unity!” and “Majority Rule!” The answer was that I alone stood between my friends and annihilation at the polls. To that appeal there could be but one answer. Just as I was struggling to my feet after a wearing illness of many months, my wife and myself left Florence in a train in which we were the only passengers on a forlorn night in December, with the still more forlorn feelings of a pair of escaped slaves recaptured and going back in chains to the Plantation.

What happened after our arrival in Ireland has already been related (*An Olive Branch in Ireland*, Chapter XXII.), and need not detain us here. Enough that the fourteen men marked down for vengeance were one and all returned to Parliament and the cabal overthrown and disgraced. And to the comic surprise of the statesmen of the Board of Erin, the spirit they had summoned from the dead remained to haunt their banquet-tables and to pursue them to their Dunsinane. All we claimed now, or had claimed all along, was liberty of the platform



and of the Press to submit to our countrymen opinions to which the only marvel of Irishmen of intelligence nowadays is how their wisdom could ever have been doubted. But the lesson of the General Election was the utter defencelessness of public liberty without some form of organization for mutual protection. The Hibernian Party thought to avenge their humiliations at the polls by excluding from their ranks the representatives of every constituency which had declined to obey their *mandat d'élire* and refusing them the Parliamentary indemnity for the payment of which the national funds in their custody had been subscribed. Even unfortunate Mr. Ginnell, who had never failed to follow the Party Whip into the Division lobbies, was by physical violence ejected from their meeting-place for suggesting a public audit of their funds, and a band of stalwarts was organized to give the same shrift to the rest of us, should we present ourselves for admission. But they need not have been perturbed. They had made their company impossible for men of honour. It was resolved to form, under the name of the All-for-Ireland League, a National organization, broad-based enough to embrace men of every denomination and school of Self-Government from the most moderate to the most advanced, for the cultivation of a National Unity higher and more sacred than the trade unity of any Party. The new movement was based upon those principles of "Conference, Conciliation, and Consent," which the Irish Party and the country had made their own in 1903 by every vow that could bind them—which had been re-affirmed by the violated Treaty of Reunion in 1908—and which the reaction against a narrow Party tyranny already beginning to stir the country was bound to restore ultimately as the programme of a united nation. The resolution by which the All-for-Ireland League was established propounded as its primary aim "the



union and active co-operation in every department of our national life of all Irishmen and women who believe in the principle of domestic self-government for Ireland," and for the accomplishment of its object declared: "We believe the surest means to be a combination of all the elements of the Irish population in a spirit of mutual tolerance and patriotic good-will such as shall guarantee to the Protestant minority of our fellow-countrymen inviolable security for all their rights and liberties, and win the friendship of the people of Great Britain, without distinction of Party."



## CHAPTER II

“ A DESPERATE VENTURE ”

(1911)

PERHAPS the greatest of the disadvantages under which the All-for-Ireland League laboured from its birth was that the inaugural meeting could not have been held in Dublin. Here again it was misconception and not unfriendliness that raised a difficulty but for which the course of contemporary Irish history might have taken a different turn and regenerated the National Movement without the sharp surgery of the Rising of Easter Week. The Sinn Féin movement of Mr. Arthur Griffith, in its purely intellectual and non-military stage, was beginning at this time to establish a wholesome supremacy in the Irish capital as the inevitable recoil from the corporate jobbery and venality of the Board of Erin reign. At my request Captain Shawe-Taylor, the originator of the Land Conference, and a fanatic in his passion for conciliation among Irishmen, waited on Mr. Griffith to invoke the aid of his organization in arranging an inaugural meeting of the All-for-Ireland League in Dublin, impressing upon him that the project would leave Sinn Féin, and all other schools of national thought, the widest liberty to develop on their own lines, provided they could see their way to combine for the formation of a great National confraternity of Irishmen from which the best ultimate solution and the most competent men to think it out would gradually be evolved. I was in a position to inform him that every section of Cork Nationalists—the Gaelic League, the Sinn



Féiners (then only a handful, but an inestimable handful of diamonds<sup>1</sup>), the Gaelic Athletic Association, and the Young Ireland Society, as well as the City Branch of the old United Irish League and the Land and Labour Association were joining with passionate eagerness in our preliminary meetings, and that nothing but a great inaugural rally in Dublin was wanting to give the movement a firm hold on the imagination of the country. Nor did I fail to make it clear that no contest of persons or of leadership was involved—that Lord Dunraven, Mr. Healy, and myself, for want of better, were willing to throw ourselves into the necessary inaugural work, but that nobody was more sensible than we of the drawbacks which old controversies had associated with our names, and that our truest hope was that out of the bands of ardent young Irishmen of all types and conditions who would flock to our free platform there would spring another Parnell with the youth, the ardour, and the high purpose to lead the Nation on to a future of nobler inspirations and achievements.

Resolutions conceived in that spirit were submitted to Mr. Griffith for approval or emendation. Captain Shawe-Taylor brought back the message that with our ideal Mr. Griffith was in cordial agreement, but that he and his friends could not consent to stand on the platform of the All-for-Ireland League unless there was added a resolution demanding the withdrawal of the representatives of Ireland from the Westminster Parliament. To do this, of course, would be to alienate nine-tenths of our sympathisers, and indeed to swallow our own

<sup>1</sup> Including the murdered Lord Mayors Terence MacSwiney and Tomás MacCurtain, and also Mr. J. J. Walsh, the Postmaster General of the Irish Republican Government of 1916 and of the Provisional Government of 1922.



deepest convictions, which were that it was not Parliamentaryism, but only nerveless and corrupt Parliamentaryism, which had broken down. In the circumstances of that time, the Hungarian precedent, to which Mr. Griffith clung, would have left Ireland without defence at the mercy of the English Parliament, and indeed would have been flatly rejected by every constituency in the island, as it had already been at the only Irish election (Leitrim) where a Sinn Féin candidate had presented himself. Nothing less than the undreamt-of break-up of empires caused by the convulsions of the World-War could have opened the way to a policy, which, up to the outbreak of the war, seemed to disown the advantages both of an active representation at Westminster and of armed resistance in Ireland. Our movement, propounding no dogma of its own as to the ultimate bounds of Irish liberty, would have left Mr. Griffith at complete liberty to recommend his own doctrines; but at the very start to impose them upon all comers would only have been to clear our platform of all but a minute intellectual minority. But without at least the benevolent neutrality of Sinn Féin, a successful start in Dublin was out of the question.

Mr. Griffith's decision, in compelling us to transfer the inaugural meeting to Cork, gave the All-for-Ireland movement a certain sectional and provincial aspect, which the implacable foes of "the Cork accent" were not slow to exploit, and did much to increase the timidity of that Irish Protestant minority which a great Metropolitan meeting joyfully commingling Irishmen of all ranks and creeds would have dispelled. Mr. Griffith fatally overestimated the growing popularity of Sinn Féin in Dublin. Whether or not he was throwing away his opportunity for an eventual peaceful triumph of his own movement, without the horrors, however



glorious, or the chaos, however unavoidable, of the ten years that were to follow, it would be now idle to debate. What there is no disputing is that not very long after the All-for-Ireland League had been cut off from Dublin, and the Board of Erin thus relieved from their principal disquiet, the temporary success of Sinn Féin in the Dublin wards and in its Corporation began to waste away, before the renewed ascendancy of the Hibernians, and the Sinn Féin movement proper continued to decline year after year until there was little left of it except its name, when some English newspaper man hard up for a name to distinguish the "Irish Volunteers" of the Rising of 1916 from Mr. Redmond's "National Volunteers" transferred the designation of Sinn Féin to the very different Republican movement which was presently to overflow the country.

The All-for-Ireland movement, however, responded to an instinct which no discouragements could withstand that some great change was a national necessity, and that it was coming. To such a depth had Freedom of the Press sunk in Dublin, that £60 had to be paid for the announcement of the existence of the League in one "Nationalist" daily newspaper, and even then the announcement was only admitted to its advertising columns, since as "news" the extent of the new movement must not be divulged. In the South, where the *Cork Examiner*, up to the time of its apostacy, had honestly reported our speeches, the Nationalists of Cork and the adjoining counties of every hue and section were overwhelmingly friendly. The farmers whom the policy of Conciliation *plus* Business had almost universally established as owners, the labourers who, thanks to its operations, had come into possession of many thousands of cosy cottages and allotments, the young men of vision who if they would go further than we somehow felt that our ideals could lead to



nothing base were all ready for the signal—all except the placemen, actual or expectant. The Southern Unionists were almost as universally friendly. Until quite recently, the extent to which the principles of national fraternity were permeating the Irish Protestant minority, although confidentially known to us, was unsuspected by the general public, for unluckily these men, long withdrawn from active politics and living with their families often in remote districts where they were open to Hibernian intimidation, and, above all, disheartened by the vilification with which the first notable Unionist converts to the principle of self-government were pelted by Mr. Dillon and his newspaper, were not to be got to declare themselves on the public platforms until it was too late to make their adhesion duly valued.

This was the difficulty hinted at by Lord Rossmore—once the Grand Master of the Orange Order in County Monaghan, and one not to be daunted by abuse from continuing to be to the day of his death as genial a Home Ruler as he had been a militant Ulster Unionist—in a letter enclosing a subscription of £10 to the new League:

“I wish I was a richer man to put another 0 to my cheque. I assure you that my *unwillingness* is not the reason I do not do so. If everyone who really agrees with the A. F. I. League did according to their means, what I am willingly and openly doing, the League would not want long for funds.”

It was the same sense of the lack of moral courage among his brother Unionists which, as much as the rabid hostility of the Hibernians, moved Lord Dunraven, in a personal letter to myself, to this rather alarming estimate of the magnitude of the enterprise before the new League:

“Adare Manor.

“February 9.

“MY DEAR MR. O'BRIEN,—You are on a venture



as desperate as any undertaken by fabled knights of old for the destruction of dragons and the rescue of damsels in distress. I am sure you have the well wishes and sympathy of every honest and common-sense man in Ireland.

“Yours sincerely,  
“DUNRAVEN.”

In his public letter to the inaugural meeting, however, he nailed the green flag to his masthead and kept it flying there *usque ad noctem* with the intrepidity of the old yachtsman “pleased with the danger when the waves went high.” An extract from it ought to be preserved as depicting the type of patriotic Irish Protestant who, for being a patriot, was traduced by Hibernian speakers and writers with a virulence never attempted against Sir Edward Carson :

“These three essentials (self-government, completion of Land Purchase, and protection against over-taxation) can be attained only by Irish men and women working for them patiently, strenuously, and honestly, so far as they conscientiously can, and I am very sure that the vast majority can join hand in hand in working out the salvation of the country, if only they have the charity and courage to put aside paltry prejudice and follow the dictates of their hearts. The opposite policy has been tried now for years, and with what result? Land Purchase is dead, over-taxation has been condoned, and control of our own affairs is further off than ever. I do not wish to go into personal matters, but I may say this : For myself I have honestly tried to help my country without reference to Party. I supported the Liberal Party in their land policy so far as it went and I opposed their Treasury Relief Bill. I opposed the Conservatives in their efforts to stultify Ireland by grossly exaggerating crime and disorder, and I



supported them in their land legislation. I did what I could in the matter of reinstatement of evicted tenants, in legislation for labourers and in respect of University Education, with the result, so far as I can see, of exasperating those who hate reconciliation and who spurn the assistance of Irishmen who disapprove of their tactics. That may be a matter of indifference to me, but not to Ireland, for such methods stifle nationality. A great opportunity was lost at the time of the Land Conference when the spirit of reconciliation and its first fruit, the Land Act of 1903, was denounced. The Act has been killed. By one man at any rate it has been bravely upheld. One man had the clear vision to see what Conciliation might do, one man has stuck manfully to his guns and has fought a strenuous fight against tremendous odds, and that man is the senior member for Cork City. This Cause is a righteous one. It is the Cause of common sense, of knowledge, of charity. It appeals to all that is best and truest in the hearts of the people. It is the cause I will support as long as I can and to the best of my ability."

Desperate as was the venture, in face of a still unshaken Hibernian despotism, the aloofness of Sinn Féin, and the suspicions of the Protestant minority, many of the finest spirits among the Irish nobles and captains of industry associated themselves openly from the first with the fortunes of the All-for-Ireland League—Lord Castletown of Upper Ossory, Mr. Moreton Frewen, Captain H. Sheehy-Keating of the Irish Guards (killed at Mons), Colonel Hutcheson Poë, Sir John Keane, of Cappoquin, Mr. Villiers Stuart, of Dromana, Lord Rossmore, Mr. Richard E. Longfield, D.L., of Longueville, Sir Timothy O'Brien, Mr. Lindsay Talbot Crosbie, of Ardfert, Alderman Richard Beamish (High Sheriff of Cork City), Lord Monteagle—heads of historic Irish houses breathing



a patriotism no less sincere, if as yet more subdued in words than the most fire-tried of the veteran Nationalists who flocked to our banner—the last of the grey-haired old Fenians of Rebel Cork or the venerable National poet, Mr. T. D. Sullivan, the author of “God Save Ireland,” whose last speech in life was spoken at the inaugural meeting in Cork. There were sympathisers in far larger numbers who were known to be only awaiting a propitious hour to declare themselves, and at last (although too tardily) have done so—men like Lord Shaftesbury, who had been thrice Lord Mayor of Belfast and was Chancellor of the Belfast University, the Protestant Archbishop of Dublin (Dr. Bernard), Lord Powerscourt, Sir John Arnott, Canon Flewett, the Rector of Mallow, Sir Jocelyn Coghill, Lord Oranmore and Browne, Lord Kenmare, Lord Bandon, H.M.L., Dean Grierson (afterwards Bishop of Down and Connor), Professor Butcher, M.P., Professor Trench, LL.D., and Lord Barrymore himself, who had been the Samson Agonistes of Irish landlordism in its last battles, and whose coming over, one of the achievements of my life of which I am proudest, was, of course, imputed to me as the inexpressible sin against the Holy Ghost. It is certain further that the movement commanded the secret sympathy of some of the most potent statesmen of Britain in both Parties—Lord Loreburn (Lord Chancellor), Mr. Bryce, Lord Morley,<sup>1</sup> Lord Eversley (once Mr. Shaw-Lefevre),

<sup>1</sup> “In speaking in the House of Lords, I alluded to the opinion expressed by Mr. Bonar Law, by the Postmaster General, and by the Chief Secretary for Ireland, in favour of settlement by Conference. I said that being the case why on earth don’t you attempt to try to make a settlement through Conference and consent? I was interrupted by Lord Morley. He said: ‘Yes, a settlement by consent, but on the lines?’—‘Well, on what lines?’—‘On the lines,’ he said, ‘suggested by Mr. William O’Brien.’”—Speech by Lord Dunraven, March 1, 1913.



Mr. John Burns, Sir Edward Grey, Lord Haldane, and Mr. Thomas Burt, the first of the Labour leaders, among the Liberals, and amongst Unionists, Earl Grey (the Governor-General of Canada), Lord Carnarvon, son of the Lord Carnarvon, a famous Tory Viceroy in Ireland, who was a Home Ruler thirty-seven years before his Party and was as scurvily betrayed by Lord Salisbury as was George Wyndham twenty-four years after him, Mr. Walter Long, a man much maligned by "The Party" as an anti-Irish Conservative but for all that has been said to the contrary as romantic a lover of Ireland as his mother's Irish blood could make him as well as a straightforward English gentleman, of whom I think it is no libel to report that from the start he declared: "I shall have to oppose Home Rule as it stands, but I will only oppose it from the lips out"—even it must in justice be recorded Mr. F. E. Smith (now Lord Birkenhead), who had not yet been beguiled into his adventures as "Gallopier" in the Covenanting Army of Sir E. Carson. I speak without personal knowledge, when I add to the list Lord Lansdowne, in at least a shy tentative way (his son, the Earl of Kerry, has just accepted a seat in the Free State Senate); and I should not, I imagine, be very wide of the mark, if I were to use the most august British name of all.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> From the Editor of a London Unionist morning newspaper, the name of which would now sound startlingly (it was not *The Times*), I received a letter heavily marked "Secret and Confidential," under date "April 29th, 1910," in which he wrote: "My friend, Mr. ——— has to-day had a long confidential talk with me, and as a result I have advised him to see you *without delay*. He has a proposal of importance to put before you. I have no hesitation in asking you to give him an opportunity of discussing it fully with you. Mr. ——— has approached me in strict confidence in my private capacity, but I have, of course, assured myself of the *bona fides* and straightforwardness of his proposal before giving him this letter to you, though the fact that the proposal came through him was a guarantee of both.



Lord Midleton and the Irish nobles and country gentlemen, who were afterwards to follow him into the Anti-Partition League were not yet heard of. Sir Horace Plunkett (to my deep disappointment) could not be induced to discover any genuine sympathy with Home Rule, of which he ultimately conceived himself to be the father. The vast country meetings of magistrates under the presidency of their respective Lords Lieutenant—the weighty declarations of Chambers of Commerce, professional men and masters of industry in Dublin, Cork, and Limerick, which unfortunately waited for Sinn Féin to make in 1920 the professions of faith which would have been priceless in 1911—all were secretly in sympathy, but stood tongue-tied while we were treading the wine-press all alone. Had these tremendous forces only boldly shown themselves in 1911, as they did after the bloody lesson of 1916—had the occasion produced some new Irish leader with the magic of command—and had not King Edward the Peacemaker been untimely cut off—who will now doubt that Irish freedom must have been won without the firing of a shot and with all the unity and multiform strength that would have been derived from the effacement of racial and religious antagonisms? It was not to be. The response on all sides was secretly friendly, but it was the response of Felix, the Roman Governor: “I shall send for you again when I find an opportune time.” We were sent for again, but—the pity of it!—it was at the most inopportune of times when

As Editor of the ——— I have no knowledge of the matter, as a private individual the proposal has my sympathy as an honest attempt on ———’s part to assist a cause which he has deeply at heart.” A few days after the receipt of this letter King Edward the Peacemaker was dead. A week later I received another letter from the Editor stating that the death of King Edward had made it useless to carry the matter further and that the mysterious visitor had given up his mission to Ireland. What the “proposal of importance” was, I have never heard since.



the mischief had all been done. The Irish people, uninformed of the truth, pointed to the small number of Irish Unionists on our platforms as a proof of the hopelessness of the task of conciliating them ; and the Irish Unionists, however secretly willing, recoiled from speaking out, with the example before their eyes of the ferocious maltreatment accorded to those of their brethren who had been the first to burn their boats. In that vicious circle, the country was forced to revolve until the opportunity was lost. But it was an enterprise nobly worth "all the cost and the pain," for to the policy of "Conference, Conciliation, and Consent" is traceable the whole course of events which made Lord Midleton and his friends in the House of Lords fast friends of Home Rule, and brought Sir James Craig into friendly conference with Mr. Michael Collins, and Mr. Lloyd George into still friendlier conferences with "The Murder Gang," to whom he proffered the extremest form of Irish liberty short of a Republican name as well as substance.



## CHAPTER III

## A PSYCHIC ANALYSIS

WE have seen that the Liberal-Hibernian alliance of the Parliament of 1906 achieved nothing better for Ireland than the repeal of the great Act of 1903 and the stoppage of Land Purchase in the interest of the English Treasury. In the Parliament of 1911, we have now to examine a phenomenon more incomprehensible still—viz., the destruction of Home Rule and of the Parliamentary movement as the net result for Ireland of the same ill-fated Liberal-Hibernian combination. And the wrong to Ireland is the harder to explain, that, whereas the first government of Mr. Asquith was pledged not to introduce a Home Rule Bill, and had still the House of Lords to quote as an excuse for all its failures, Mr. Asquith's Government of 1911 was elected with the express mandate to give "full self-government to Ireland," and the House of Lords had been stripped of its Veto. Sir E. Carson's Covenanting Army of Ulster was not yet in existence, and it seemed as if no mismanagement open to human folly could well stop the course of the victorious Anglo-Irish majority. Furthermore, Irish pride has to bear the humiliation of confessing that this series of disasters was due in a lesser degree to any conscious perfidy on the part of the Liberal leaders than to the culpable complaisance of Ireland's own representatives.

It may be worth while to essay some explanation of a helplessness so deeply wounding to our reputation as a nation. To begin with, the common run of the people have to be ruled out of calculation



altogether. For reasons that this book will make clear, they were deprived of all real knowledge of what was going on and were lulled into a state of enchantment in which in the very excess of their yearning for "Unity" they allowed Party Unity to be turned into an instrument of immeasurable misfortune for the nation, and went on pathetically chanting the litany of "Trust Asquith" and "Trust Redmond" until the movement of Parnell had perished. The bulk of "The Party" were little better informed, and were as honest victims of the hypnosis as they were unfitted for their high office. The mischief is to be traced to the infatuation of not more than four or five Irish politicians, and it will long remain one of the riddles of history how men who are not to be suspected of conscious personal dishonour, nor denied either capacity or patriotic records, nevertheless allowed themselves to be beguiled into a series of disservices to Ireland which could not well have brought more harm in their train if they had been the work of their nation's worst enemies. The fault of the titular leader of the Party was a passive one, but for that very reason was destructive of his usefulness as a leader. He made no disguise in private of the fact that the whole course of policy which he was supposed to direct was one of which he deeply disapproved, and that the policy which he consented to anathematise in public as factionism was one which he would gladly have made his own, could he have dared. His famous apothegm—"Better be united on a short-sighted and foolish policy than divided on a far-seeing and wise one"—will live as the explanation of his fated failure as a leader, and of the suicide, so to say, of his fine abilities. He preserved the mechanical Party Unity which enabled the Board of Erin to dominate and ruin the "constitutional" movement, and he sacrificed the National Unity to which he knew that sectarian



secret society to be the insurmountable obstacle. It is the shrewd religion of Mid-Africa (and elsewhere) to offer sacrifice to the bad gods on the calculation that the good ones will do one no harm. Mr. Redmond was a good deal addicted to that form of worship in his dealings with the powers of Hibernianism. The bad gods accepted his oblations with gracious nostrils, until their turn came to be strong enough to immolate him themselves at the Lloyd George Convention.

Even of the three men who originated the revolt against the policy of Conciliation *plus* Business, nobody in Ireland said a hurtful word of Mr. Davitt's scruples as a Land Nationalizer, and long before his death he was manifesting his bewitching readiness to acknowledge his mistakes of judgment, while Mr. Sexton had he stood alone was of a jealous and uncertain temper, wont to give more uneasiness to his friends than to his adversaries.<sup>1</sup> He was of those reasoners who baffle Reason, and of those financiers who bedevil figures by conjuring with them. He demonstrated with irrefragable logic and perfect nonsense that the Irish farmers had only to boycott the Act of 1903 to obtain the land at 13½ years purchase. No sooner did the country realize that all his brilliant actuarial calculations in the *Freeman* had resulted in the destruction of Land Purchase by means of the English Treasury Bill glorified in his leading

<sup>1</sup> Lord Morley remarked to Sir Algernon West, "Sexton and Dillon, good and honest but always feminine and impatient" (*Private Diaries of Sir Algernon West*, p. 295). This particular censure of Dillon was as much mistaken as Morley's judgments of Irish affairs usually were, but of Sexton's little pets and whimsies nobody who knew him under the surface will question the accuracy of the description. Sexton himself better hit the blot in Dillon's make-up as a leader when he once asked: "Has Dillon no friend intimate enough to give him a hint that the first person singular is not the only case of the Personal Pronoun?"



articles and thrust upon the country by the Baton Convention than the circulation of his paper went to pieces, and he abandoned the falling concern before it had yet openly invoked the protection of the Bankruptcy Court, and Mr. Sexton was not heard of again in public affairs.

Mr. T. P. O'Connor in his fathomless ignorance of Ireland and honest faith in Mr. Dillon was another of the "determined campaigners" against the National Policy, but "T. P." was all his life an English politician with a genial Connacht accent, and in Ireland mattered not at all. Mr. Devlin, who in the early stages of the conspiracy was of little account outside the dismal theatre of Belfast riots, had by this time emerged from the shadows of the secret society he was to make the master of the country, and had gained possession of the triple power of paid Secretary of the United Irish League, National President of the Board of Erin Order of Hibernians, and Member of Parliament, and was already wielding the weapons of a pugnacious demagogue by which he compelled Mr. Redmond to repudiate the Irish Council Bill, and which long afterwards enabled him to inflict upon the same unhappy leader that defeat at the Lloyd George Irish Convention of 1917 from which Mr. Redmond tragically dragged himself away to his death-bed. But even at the time at which we have arrived, the baleful power of the Board of Erin had not yet sufficiently taken possession of the country to supply more than physical force to give practical effect to Mr. Dillon's words.

It was Mr. Dillon's own personality and the respect inspired chiefly, it is curious to remember, by his austere devotion to the highly "unconstitutional" doctrines of the John Mitchel school, which he once professed and which he was afterwards to repudiate with so lofty a constitutional mien—this was the



force which alone could have saved the original mutiny against the national will from flickering out in a fit of temper. He had now got hold of the Party and its leader, and with amazing audacity had made the cause of "Unity" and "Majority Rule" his own; and to his success above all other things the misfortunes of the succeeding years must be accounted. Concerning human motives, who shall make bold enough to lay down dogmas? It would be absurd to hold Mr. Dillon immune from the vanities and jealousies which are never altogether missing in the character of the best men who are politicians, or, for that matter, of most men and women who are not. The chance which excluded him from the Land Conference, and the fact that, to the amazement of all men, it succeeded without him, must unquestionably be credited with a good deal of the soreness which clouded his judgment, without at all lessening our indulgence for the human frailty which is the badge of all our tribe. But any suggestion that it was motives of this pettiness which really determined the action of an Irish leader in a crisis of the first magnitude for his country is one of the last that could occur to one like the present writer, who from the outset regarded John Dillon as, next to Parnell, the most romantic figure in contemporary affairs, who, when Parnell would gladly have retired in his own favour, insisted upon Dillon in his stead, and, when Parnell was gone, never ceased to press Mr. Dillon's claims upon his countrymen until his more substantial qualifications for leadership had been exhaustively tried out and found wanting.

A simpler explanation is at hand—one which, however little to the credit of his judgment, is a perfect vindication of his consistency. The groundwork of Mr. Dillon's political creed was the belief that the strength of the National Cause depended



upon the acuteness of the struggle for the land, and that whatever diminished the agrarian discontent and turmoil which he regarded as the driving-force of agitation aimed a mortal blow at Ireland's independence. "Keep the pot boiling"—the advice he once addressed to a Roscommon audience—did truly, if a little coarsely, embody his faith as to the only means of warfare available. "I have been a destructive politician all my life," was his boast on another occasion. There was so much to be destroyed before the reconstruction of a happy Irish nation could be commenced that up to a certain point this was also the programme of every patriotic man. His error lay in failing to see that once that point was passed, and a noble career of constructive work opened up before the country, his activity as a "destructive politician" consisted for the rest of his life in the destruction of his nation's hopes and the perpetuation of unrest and turmoil for mere turmoil-sake. In a word, he read only the half of the words of the Wise Man: "A time to destroy and a time to build." Not to allow the land war to be ended lest prosperity should kill the demand for freedom—not to give up the parade of the country's sores as a means of exciting British sympathy or the weapons of agrarian disturbance as the only means of making the bed of English rulers a thorny one—always seemed to me an ignoble doctrine of Irish patriotism—even a very wicked one if the amount of human misery it involved to keep the politicians in ammunition were fully present to the mind that conceived it, as, of course, it was not. More than that, it was a fundamentally false doctrine and proceeded from a deep-down want of faith in Irish nationality. It may be that in Mr. Dillon's case it was traceable to his early association with a part of the country which was every other year smitten with potato-failures, famines, evictions, and the basest forms



of oppression from a class of landlords scarcely less abject than their serfs. It was not perhaps unnatural if he concluded that a people who lived in a body-and-soul-destroying poverty such as that in the hungry fight for the bare life would have little leisure left for the finer instincts of manhood and national sentiment to assert themselves. Men with a deeper knowledge of the Irish nature knew that it was precisely those counties which were best educated, most prosperous, and most emancipated from dependence upon the landlords which were chiefly the recruiting grounds and fortresses in every fight for Ireland. Mr. Dillon was to live to see the final confutation of his poor opinion of the hold of nationality on the Irish peasant when Landlordism, with its evictions and oppressions, having almost passed away from every part of the country which had not followed his advice, it was the sons of the farmers turned freeholders who were amongst the most daring of the insurgents who confronted England from 1916 to 1921 with the most formidable and stubborn warfare that ever shook her rule in Ireland. But the sincerity of his conviction that the success of the National Cause depended upon keeping the wounds of the land war open is beyond dispute. At every crisis of the land struggle he took precisely the same ground. It is only just to his perverse consistency to recall that Mr. Dillon, at the head of "The Kilmainham Party," was as sharp a thorn in Parnell's flesh in 1881 as he was in our own in 1903. When Gladstone's Land Act of 1881 changed the Irish tenant-at-will into a co-proprietor, whose share of the property was worth more than the landlord's—a concession of immeasurable value in those days—Mr. Dillon publicly declared: "I will recall your attention to the fact that when the Land Bill was first made public I immediately adopted an attitude of uncompromising



hostility towards it and used whatever influence I had to secure that it should be rejected with contempt. . . . I say here I believe that if this Bill passes into law, more especially if it passes into law tolerated or countenanced by the League, it will in the course of a few months take all the power out of the arm of the Land League," and he quitted Ireland for three years rather than attorn to Parnell's policy of cautiously testing the Act. As Forster cried havoc against Parnell's plans for testing the Act of 1881, Mr. Dillon and the *Freeman* had made shipwreck of our own machinery for testing the Act of 1903. To Wilfrid Blunt he avowed that he would dearly have liked to throw out the Wyndham Bill of 1903 altogether, although he made a show of speaking in its favour, giving again the same reason as in 1881: "The land trouble is a weapon in Nationalist hands and to settle it would be to risk Home Rule." On the day when the Bill passed its Third Reading he told the famous Irish-American statesman, Bourke Cockran, in the lobby of the House of Commons that "if the Bill were allowed to work there would be an end of the national cause before twelve months." The prediction was in almost exactly the same words as his prediction of twenty-three years before, and his forebodings turned out to be still more groundless; but there was the same tenacious belief from decade to decade that the passion of Irish Nationality was too feeble to survive any wholesale improvement in the material condition of the people.<sup>1</sup> Put thus bluntly, the doctrine that you

<sup>1</sup> His public avowal of his deliberate design to cut the people off from the relief afforded by the Act was one of the most extraordinary ever made by a Parliamentary representative:

"It has been said that we have delayed the reinstatement of the evicted tenants and obstructed the smooth working of the Act. I wish to Heaven we had the power to obstruct the smooth working of the Act more than we have. It has worked too



must keep millions of men in misery if you want to make them free would seem almost too fantastic to be shocking. But that was nevertheless the underlying meaning of the determination that the Act of 1903 must not "be allowed to work," and that the co-operation of Irish classes and communions in which it originated must not be allowed to extend itself. So little was the hostility to Land Purchase motivated by any genuine belief in its financial injustice that after seven years even of such "working" as the Act had received in spite of him, Mr. Dillon confided to the same Wilfrid Blunt in 1910 that "it

smoothly—far too smoothly, to my mind. . . . Some men have complained that the Land Act is not working fast enough. For my part I look upon it as working a great deal too fast. Its pace has been ruinous to the people."—(Speech at Swinford, September 12, 1906.)

His character for sincerity is not enhanced by the probability that this gross misjudgment of the Act was only a cover to conceal by a show of concern for the people's practical interests his real grounds for hatred of the Act, but dubious as is the compliment, there cannot be much doubt that what he was thinking of was not that the prices were excessive, but that the success of the Act would be ruinous to the National Cause.

Here is the judgment of an Irish-American publicist of distinction, Rev. Father Owen B. McGuire, of the Act which Mr. Dillon wished he had the power of obstructing, and which he elsewhere described as "mortgaging the future of Ireland to our hereditary enemies," and as a measure bound to end in "National Bankruptcy."

"I have always maintained that the Land Act of 1903 was the greatest victory since the Battle of Clontarf. The Norse power was finally broken at Clontarf. The Anglo-Norman power was broken by the victory of 1903. The Irish people as a result are coming gradually into possession of the land of Ireland. The foreign garrison is gradually disappearing. Those who remain, no longer dependent for their position or their property on an alien power, will be absorbed eventually by the nation and will become Irish. The Norman invasion in its essence has been undone by the Act of 1903. It may take some years yet to complete the work, but complete victory is as certain as to-morrow's dawn."—(*Irish World*, September 24, 1921.)



had changed the whole character of the peasantry, and instead of being careless, idle, and improvident had made them like the French peasantry, industrious and economical, even penurious." But all that, so far from shaking his belief in his own mission of destruction, only made him frankly lament his failure to prevent the transformation and confirmed him in the stern duty not at any cost to allow an equally happy Home Rule settlement by consent or by any except "the old methods" and by "doses of the old medicine." No more cruel reproof of Mr. Dillon could well be devised than that he should be compelled to re-read his own prophecies of bankruptcy and ruin from the Act of 1903, and then read the announcement of Mr. P. J. Hogan, the Minister of Agriculture of the Irish Provisional Government (September 20, 1922), after twenty years' experience of the Land Purchase Act which was denounced as "a landlord swindle" doomed to "end in National Insolvency."

"There was still a real land trouble and that was the problem of completing Land Purchase, which must be solved at the first opportunity."

How little the verdict of time and of judges prepossessed by every tie of affection in his favour had shaken the self-satisfaction of the hapless leader who had killed Land Purchase and Home Rule and led his Party to its grave, may be judged from his own calm retrospect of his achievements in a public letter dated so late as April 29, 1921:

"I see you fully appreciate the horrible character of the task I undertook. But looking back on the whole matter in the light of what has happened since, I see nothing to regret. If I were faced with the same circumstances, I should do again as I then did. There was just one off-chance of saving the country from all it has suffered during the last three years. The Government destroyed that chance by



passing the Conscription Act and by arresting the Sinn Féin leaders during the Cavan election. And they did this in the teeth of repeated warnings from me of what the result of such action would be.

"I also foresaw and warned the Sinn Féin leaders of what the people would be up against if they persisted in their campaign to win a Republic by violence. So that I should have the melancholy satisfaction of feeling that I am free of any shred of responsibility for what is now going on in Ireland."

It would be cruel to discuss the "melancholy satisfaction" with which he looks back upon his work of "saving the country" by killing Land Purchase and Home Rule and his Party to boot.

Nevertheless, so perfectly honest was Mr. Dillon's devotion to *la politique du pire*—the policy that making things worse was the only way of making them better—that in the month following his above extraordinary confession of faith (that is to say, in May 1921) he followed it up, on the occasion of a friendly meeting between President De Valera and Sir James Craig in which all other men saw reason for rejoicing and for a conciliatory temper, with a public manifesto in which Mr. Dillon found nothing better to contribute to the peace of a distracted country than an announcement that he "was irreconcilably opposed to the programme and methods of the Republican Party," and that he and his Party would presently return to resume command of the situation! As wrong-headed as you please, but pathetic in its consistency to the last with the work of his life.

The lack of imagination broad enough to take in the vision of a nation reconstructed by the coming together of all her sons was Mr. Dillon's fatal drawback as a national leader. That in an all but miraculous opportunity of realizing such a unity, he should see nothing but "compromise," treachery,



foul plotting, and a reason for bitterer divisions than ever among Irish classes and parties, can only be accounted for by a habit of suspiciousness which was his substitute for the higher imaginative powers. His first conception of any new idea was sure to be the wrong one. He wholly misconceived the Plan of Campaign at its first presentation. It was long before he overcame his first suspicion that the United Irish League was a conspiracy hatched by Davitt and myself for the establishment of an Irish Republic by force of arms. The success of the Land Conference was so unexpected and the prospect of still wider national harmony it opened up was so amazing, he might have been excused for his first exclamation on landing in Ireland after two months absence that he found himself in a new country. Less excusable than his slowness of apprehension was that in the revolution effected by old colleagues to whom he owed much and who had given hostages of their Nationality not less genuine than his own he should discern nothing but a national catastrophe, and one organized not by incapables merely, but by traitors.

That was, nevertheless, the line to which he ultimately drifted. The first relief to his feelings came in abuse and misrepresentation of the landlords who had led the way to the abdication of their class and of the Chief Secretary and Under-Secretary who had made the operation possible. Nobody can peruse any public speech of his in those years without coming across passages which the country had later on bitter reason to lament had ever been spoken—passages reeking with virulent racial and class prejudices which can scarcely have been quite sincerely felt, and directed of all men against those Irish Unionists who had been foremost in striving to divest their class of all the ancient causes of division. These were, unfortunately, the class of attacks not



only most devastating in their effect upon the hope of winning the minority to the new policy, but the most likely to be popular in a country which was only the other year locked in mortal combat with the hated territorial class. As long as it was only a question of blocking Land Purchase, it was easy enough to find an audience for invectives the most lurid against "the wolfish greed of the landlords." The unthinking might even be gulled into listening while they were assured that what was really the highest recommendation of the Land Conference Agreement covered some black crime against Ireland; for the extraordinary grievance of the Land Purchase killers was that it contented the landlords and the tenants alike; that, not only were the tenants' prices favourable beyond belief, but "the English garrison" of old were guaranteed a comfortable livelihood in their native land and consequently placed above any temptation to act as "the English garrison" ever again. But the malcontents had to take up new ground when the expropriated landlords justified the calculations of the Land Conference by manifesting a desire to join in the movement for Home Rule. Their declaration for Home Rule, as to which Mr. Redmond joyfully cabled from America: "It is quite a wonderful thing; with these men with us, Home Rule may come at any moment," threw Mr. Dillon into a fit of indignation even fiercer than their consent to the abolition of Landlordism had done. To counteract the movement which his own leader received with transports of joy, he fell back upon new and more desperate allegations and inventions, the wickedness of which, if they were not the hallucinations of a sick brain, nothing could redeem.

The country, which was already growing cold to the daily wail of the *Freeman* that Land Purchase spelt National Insolvency, had now to be worked up into a genuine alarm by bloodcurdling revelations that



the cause of the nation was sold, and that a deep-laid plot was on foot to betray the Party and the *Freeman* and the national movement into the hands of swindling ex-landlords and Dublin Castle Unionists. Worst of all, to give the new plot any verisimilitude, it had to be at first insinuated, and in the long run brutally proclaimed, that the conspiracy of the Wyndhams and Dunravens and Sir Antony MacDonnells to supplant the Irish Party, buy up the Nationalist constituencies, and capture the *Freeman's Journal* by a base Stock Exchange "deal," had the traitorous support of powerful Nationalist accomplices. It was especially against one of these, who, as it happened, had been for half a lifetime Mr. Dillon's most intimate friend, and to whom he was indebted for his first period of leadership, that "all the guns of Tipperary had now to be turned against O'Brien" (to use the Christian language of a Southern minister of peace of the funny name of Father Innocent Ryan) in campaign after campaign destined to make any accommodation between Mr. Redmond and myself impossible. Each and every one of these atrocious allegations, of course, turned out to be "a false, defamatory and malicious libel," and were so declared by a jury of Mr. Dillon's countrymen. For most of us onslaughts based on grounds so grotesquely untrue might only have raised a smile. There was a dinner party at Dublin Castle at which Wyndham, Lord Dunraven, Sir Antony MacDonnell, and "a powerful Nationalist" (as to whose identity there could be no doubt) plotted the destruction of the Irish Party and the substitution of a loyalist "Centre Party" to which the "powerful Nationalist" undertook to turn over 18 Nationalist constituencies. There was a still more awful tale of a villainous Stock Exchange "deal" of Wyndham and his accomplices to buy over and silence the faithful *Freeman*. As it happened, I was able to mention in the witness-box



that I had never exchanged a word with Wyndham unless across the floor of the House of Commons, and up to that moment had never met Lord Dunraven except in Mr. Redmond's company, and that the guilty dinner was a coinage of Mr. Dillon's brain. The famous Stock Exchange deal turned out still more disastrously for the mythomaniacs. It was the case of the Hon. Charles Russell, the loyallest of Liberals, proposing to buy some *Freeman* shares as a business investment for a client of whom he was the trustee, and to place the shares in the name of Mr. Redmond, to which Mr. Sexton, like the faithful follower that he was of his "trusted leader" (to whom he had refused to speak since the Parnell Split), point blank demurred, unless the shares were placed in the name of that other loyal Redmondite, Mr. Dillon, instead! But even with the verdict, "false, defamatory, and malicious libellers," branded across their foreheads, the mythomaniacs went gaily on, and for long years afterwards held a credulous country in their thrall. But a danger far graver was that, in a country deprived of all means of hearing our answer, the reiteration of such charges by a responsible leader did succeed in arousing among the uninstructed a genuine National alarm, with the result that all toleration was refused to the infant Home Rule movement which was beginning to stir in the Irish Unionist body. Such were the legends—which would have been comically if they were not wickedly false—which for the next ten years were to deceive Ireland and Britain in their judgment of what was happening in Ireland, and to deepen the distrust of the Protestants and Presbyterians of Ulster into something like a loathing for their Catholic countrymen.

There is one other aid towards understanding Mr. Dillon's almost personal resentment of friendliness to Ireland so long as it came from the



Unionists. He was an hereditary Liberal of the Manchester school. His father, who had survived his dreams of the Young Ireland cycle, fell under the charm of John Bright's eloquent courtship of Ireland—the first accents of affection that had fallen from English lips since the early speeches of Charles Fox—and spent his declining years under the refrigerating influence of Cardinal Cullen as his coadjutor in his wars against the Fenian men. The son was as a child fondled on the knee of the English Tribune and began life in the cotton trade in Manchester under his auspices. It is true that he got his foothold in Irish public life as a member (the only non-Fenian member) of the band of grizzled I. R. B. extremists who carried John Mitchel for Tipperary as the foe of all Parliamentary politics and the unrelenting hater of the English name. The fact seems to conflict strangely with his later boast in the House of Commons that "he never belonged to the Separatist group," and with his somewhat exaggerated claim to represent a "constitutional movement" of the most rigid moderation. But it is certain that in the wildest of the early philippics which gained him the reputation of a new John Mitchel, he never extended his denunciations of England to the Liberal Party, and always nourished the same able-bodied hate of the Tories as Dr. Johnson did of "the Whig dogs." All this spoiled nothing as long as Ireland's fortunes were bound up with those of Gladstone and his Party. Mr. Dillon's duties and tastes alike led him into the most intimate social relations with distinguished Liberals and made him the most effective Irish figure on the Liberal platforms of the "Union of Hearts" campaign.

But it was a different matter when the vicissitudes of time made it Ireland's interest no longer to regard her Cause as the party property of any particular



set of English politicians—when, whatever was to be got from the Tories was, on Parnell's old principle, to be accepted with impartial good-will—when, in point of fact, it became more and more evident that a combination of both British parties was the surest, if not the only, road to a broad-based Irish settlement, in the highest interest of the Empire itself as well as of Ireland. This was a wholly new point of view which for many years simply bewildered and stupefied Mr. Dillon, and which, indeed, he never came fully to understand, much less to sympathise with. The idea of co-operating with the memorable Irish crusade of Wyndham was to him unorthodox to the verge of blasphemy. The greater its success in effacing Landlordism and leading up to Home Rule, the stronger was the patriotic duty of frustrating it. In vain he was reminded that the new programme of a Home Rule settlement by common consultation between the Liberal and Unionist front benches, and by preference under the auspices of a Unionist Government, was in reality first suggested by Gladstone, who in a letter to Mr. Balfour (December 20, 1885) wrote: "It will be a public calamity if this great subject should fall into the lines of party conflict . . . and I desire specially on grounds of public policy that it should be dealt with by the present (Unionist) Government." Even this circumstance, as sometimes happens with zealots more Catholic than the Pope, scarcely reconciled the pupil who imbibed his Liberalism at the knee of John Bright, to the notion of collaboration with the Tories, even though it was for the realization of Gladstone's far-seeing programme of twenty years before. When to the suggestion of an understanding with the English Unionist Party there was added, as a still more vital element of success for Home Rule, an understanding with the Irish Unionists—"our hereditary enemies," the "Cromwellian spawn," the true-begotten heirs



of Ascendancy and of Landlordism, and of every form of oppression that had harried the native race for centuries—the proposition was one still harder to digest. To cap all, when, after a few months' absence in America, he found that the success of the Land Conference had effected such a revolution in the national politics that "he scarcely knew it was the same country," it is at least comprehensible that a man of his abnormal slowness in taking in new developments should pass from a state of bewilderment to a state of sacred rage, and with the facility with which suspicion breeds credulity, should be unable to find any explanation of the transformation scene except some black betrayal of the Irish Cause by the Nationalist leaders at the helm while his back was turned.

That is, at all events, the most indulgent apology I can frame for the infatuation which in the last two Parliaments made him the prime mover in the expulsion of Wyndham from Ireland and the stoppage of Land Purchase and in the Parliament now elected was to make him the dictator of a policy ending in the annihilation of the Home Rule movement and the Partition of the country. The Unionist Party could do no right and the Liberal Party could do no wrong.



## CHAPTER IV

## THE HOME RULE LIBERAL DESTROYERS OF HOME RULE

THE Home Rule Parliament of 1911 had a power little short of unbounded to make up to Ireland for the loss of the Home Rule understanding with the Unionist Government of 1903 and for the wanton stoppage of Land Purchase, by devising and passing a statesmanlike Home Rule settlement of their own. The Irish Party had it in their power to compel such a settlement, if it were not voluntarily forthcoming. Theirs was session after session a casting vote, such as Ireland had never possessed before and can never possess again in the Imperial Parliament—a casting vote incomparably more continuous and decisive than the few momentary flashes of power which had enabled Parnell in 1885 within six months to bring both British Parties competing to be first in the race for a Home Rule *entente*. What portion of the blame is to be assigned to the Liberal Government, and what to Ireland's own plenipotentiaries, for the feebleness, or mismanagement, which squandered all these treasures of power to no avail? How are we to measure the responsibility of men, who, not content with failing to pass any measure of national self-government worth Ireland's acceptance, made their Home Rule Bill, such as it was, the means of perpetrating the most intolerable outrage England ever offered to Ireland in the worst ages of her tyranny, by cutting our venerable island into two nations, statutably designed and carved up in order to be hostile ones? Heavy is the account which both Irishmen and Liberals have to answer



for. By a miracle of conjoint bungling they turned a country brimming over with friendliness to the English people into an Irish Republic separated from England in everything beyond the gun-range of her armies.

None except the very young or the very thoughtless in Ireland are likely to underprize the dignity imparted to the Irish nation in the world's eyes by the fervour with which Gladstone devoted the close of his stately life to her service. But for many years after his taking off, Gladstone's name was not mentioned in the House of which he had been the glory, and his Irish policy was shunned by the leaders of his party as a topic too ghastly to be recalled. Lord Rosebery, who had won his premiership over the old man's body and did not deserve to hold it long, turned his leisure in Opposition to account by forming his ex-Cabinet into a Liberal League, the principal object of which was to disencumber the Liberal Party from their Home Rule commitments. Mr. Asquith, Sir E. Grey, and Mr. Haldane suffered themselves to be seduced into a recantation which was scarcely honest under a leader who, they soon found out, did not deserve to lead. Mr. Morley, indeed, did not relinquish a certain forlorn allegiance to the Irish Cause to which he owed his all in public life. But it was he, as he reveals in an Autobiography which will leave posterity puzzled as to whether he is to be classed as a Stoic or a Cynic—it was he of all men who made the Parnell Split inevitable. It was he, again on the same amazing authority, who was one of the chief actors in the intrigue by which Gladstone's intrepid resolution to appeal to the country against the House of Lords' rejection of the Home Rule Bill of 1893 was overborne, and by a change as violent as from Augustus to Augustulus, Lord Rosebery was put in the dismissed statesman's place.



The *Secret Diaries of Sir Algernon West* reveal Gladstone's own judgment both of Rosebery and of Morley. Of Rosebery's "predominant partner" speech, in a passage which is the eternal reproach of Liberal time-serving and the complete justification of the Irish Revolution Gladstone made the remark: "Rosebery's speech about convincing England in connection with Home Rule was most unfortunate and easily answered by Irishmen, who might say (and here he became earnest and very serious), 'How are we to convince you? Is it as we did by the Volunteers, by the Tithe War, when Wellington said it was yielding to Civil War' (or by some third thing I forget) 'which are the only means that ever have convinced England?'" (page 295). Of Morley we are told that Gladstone "deplored John Morley's threat of resignation and want of consideration" at crucial moments, and added "he had tried to persuade John Morley not to return to political life, for which he was not naturally fitted" (page 334).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Irish quarrels give the Pharisees much scandal, because they are apt to come off in public. The quarrels of English politicians are vastly more venomous, only the backbiting is conducted confidentially and the victims escape the public eye, as do those of Turkish palace intrigues by being consigned to the Bosphorus in sacks. The extraordinary *Private Diaries of Sir Algernon West* might well put Irishmen in a more comfortable humour with themselves when they compare the malice and pettiness of it all with our own noisier but less malignant wars. While the Grand Old Man is battling like a hero to the last against old age and half-hearted colleagues we have Asquith coolly proposing to abduct him to the House of Lords; the austere Morley "in one of his humours" protesting that Harcourt's "invariable insolence was too dreadful," and vowing he "would never again attend a Cabinet in which Harcourt sat;" Rosebery with his insomnia and his nerves of a sick school-girl almost starting an international war, because the French Ambassador, at an evening party, spoke to Gladstone and not to his Foreign Minister; members of the



Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman was, judging by the experience of the present writer, the only Liberal statesman of the first rank, after Gladstone, who never flinched from the Home Rule convictions in which he had "found salvation" even before Gladstone. Epithets like "honest," "straight," "single-hearted," leaped to the lips of all who came into contact with the breezy personality of the man. He possessed also an intellectual grasp and breadth nearer to genius than his unpretending exercise of a commonsense not disdainful of the commonplace might sometimes lead the commonplace to suspect. He had, in addition, that undaunted fighting spirit of the Borders, which was not to be put down by a succession of the bleakest rebuffs in Opposition or of still more disheartening quarrels and calumnies among his chief lieutenants or rivals. We Irish often envied him the imperturbable coolness with which he held his way in the midst of domestic dissensions, far more rancorous, although better concealed from the public, than our own, and even gave them a genial turn out of his abundant stores of the sly humour of his nation. His strength lay in that instinct of the people which values character above intellectual subtlety and in the fidelity to Ireland and to his leadership of a great mass of Liberals of

Cabinet declining to speak to each other or bargeing each other on the Treasury Bench under the eyes of the House of Commons ; the arrogant old Queen Victoria, flying out at Gladstone for giving her son, the Prince of Wales, any hint of what went on at Cabinet meetings, and so on to the tragic moment when the smooth-faced Asquith and the semi-Stoic, semi-Epicurean Morley and the blustering Harcourt combined to prevent Gladstone from dying with his Home Rule harness on his back and to put the decadent Rosebery in his place. Our proneness to "personalizing" politics—to attending rather to *quis dicit* than to *quid dicitur*—is an evil national habit, which it ought to be one of the first tasks of the future to correct ; but the fallings-out of Irish public men, if they are more outspoken, are at least less Pharisaic than is the Anglo-Saxon way.



the finest school—"good grey men" of the stamp of Shaw Lefevre, John Ellis, Henry Wilson, William Pollard Byles, Joshua Rowntree, and Jacob Bright—whose memory still smells sweet to Irish nostrils, although the waters of Lethe are already beginning to close softly over their names. When in the fulness of time the sorely-battered Liberal leader emerged victorious from the General Election of 1906, and, as Lord Shaw with a relish relates to us, was in a position to tell Mr. Asquith, Sir E. Grey, and Mr. Haldane to take the offices he assigned to them or go their ways, he had to put up with a Party in which the Rosebery influence was still strong enough to threaten the disruption of the Liberal majority if the Irish policy of Gladstone were revived. The Irish Council Bill was the best he could do in the circumstances of that particular Parliament, but he never made any concealment of the fact that the compromise was only to be thought of as one "consistent with, and leading up to, the larger policy" which it was the supreme glory of his Prime Ministry to have led to triumph in South Africa. Neither did he waver from his profession of faith made so long ago as 1885 that a true Irish settlement must be had by friendly conference among leaders on both sides and by "raising the question out of the arena of party strife." When the astonishing success of the Land Conference made such a combination of parties and classes practical politics, he so far conquered his own aversion to Treasury subsidies to the landlords as to give his hearty adhesion to the Unionist Chief Secretary's proposal to make the Bonus which was of the essence of the Bill of 1903 a free grant out of the Imperial Exchequer; and there can be little risk of wronging his memory in taking it for granted that, if he had continued to be Prime Minister, he would never have been a party to making a Liberal Government



responsible for the Act of 1909 which undid the work of conference and conciliation, and once for all flung the cause of Ireland back into "the arena of party strife."

"10 Downing Street,  
"July 1, 1907.

"*Private.*

"DEAR MR. O'BRIEN,

"I am much obliged for your letter and for the copy of your article,<sup>1</sup> which has not yet come to hand, but which I shall read with much interest.

"I have shown your letter to Mr. Birrell, who desires me to say that he has the pleasantest recollections of you in the House, and that he will always be glad to receive any suggestions and communications you have to make. *We fully share your view that it would be foolish and disastrous to do anything that would injuriously interfere with the progress of Land Purchase and the working of the Act.* His views will be fully explained when the expected discussion takes place.

"Believe me,

"Yours very truly,

"H CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN."

As much may be affirmed with only less confidence of Mr. Bryce if he had remained Chief Secretary, what with his contempt for partisan intolerance, and his native-born knowledge how much the agrarian settlement had done to mollify Ulster. On this point Mr. Morley, too, had the far-sightedness to go even further than Wyndham, and argued that it would be a cheap bargain for England to be rid of the Land War by all but doubling the amount of the Bonus proposed by the Unionists as a free gift

<sup>1</sup> In *The Nineteenth Century*, dealing with the collapse of the Irish Council Bill.



from the Imperial Treasury. He had not far-sightedness sufficient to anticipate that he would be himself a member of a Liberal Government which in the Home Rule Bill of 1912 was to be guilty of the unspeakable meanness of saddling the "free Imperial gift" of the Bonus (which Mr. Morley chivalrously doubled) upon the shoulders of Ireland as an Irish debt to be reckoned against Ireland in the Home Rule Act of 1914. Sir E. Grey and Mr. Haldane, likewise, had already so far emancipated themselves from the Rosebeery control as to give their cordial support to the new *entente cordiale* in Ireland in the debate which pledged the Liberal Party to support Wyndham in passing the Purchase Act of 1903 by consent.

From that debate Mr. Asquith and Mr. Lloyd George, the two most powerful men in the Ministry which followed Campbell-Bannerman's death, were conspicuous absentees, *et pour cause*. They, like all healthy Radicals, always found a peculiar virtue in railing against extending public aid to landlordism in any circumstances, even in the case of Ireland, where the aid was in reality given not for the support of landlordism, but in order to rid Ireland of a feudal tyranny set up by England for her own selfish purposes. They, however, obeyed Campbell-Bannerman's lead in, more or less surlily, letting the Act of 1903 reach the Statute-book as an agreed measure. In the new Parliament of 1911, where the Irish vote was paramount, no Radical in his senses would have dreamed of upsetting that settlement—the happiest in the history of English rule, and happy above all because it was of Irish, not of English, inspiration—if the representatives of Ireland had forbidden the perfidy. When, however, the Liberals found the real leaders of the Irish Party hating the Act of 1903 more ferociously than themselves, and even discovering a



perverted patriotism in lauding the Treasury Committee's plans for its destruction, the Asquiths and Lloyd Georges would have been beings of super-politician clay, if they had not gratified at the same time Irish grudges and a penurious Treasury by bidding a practically united Liberal Party cut up the last roots of the settlement of 1903 by their ill-starred Birrell Act of 1909.

And now came the question whether the Asquith Cabinet, having done Ireland the wrong of killing Land Purchase to please the Radical economists and Irish enemies of peace would at least repair the disaster by a courageous measure of Home Rule in which not more than three of their immense party majority had any desire to cross them? The temperament of the new Prime Minister was to be the deciding—or rather indecisive—factor. My first meeting with Mr. Asquith was at the headquarters of the National League in Dublin in 1886, when he sought the aid of Harrington and myself in the investigations by which he was to make up his mind on which side of the fence he was to get down in the Coercion struggle then impending. A sharp-featured, close-shaven lawyer man with the English habit of self-suppression, cultivated to the point of showing no visible trace of human emotion of any kind—an advocate, not an enthusiast, who put his questions and jotted down his facts, not with any pretence of a lyric passion for Irish nationality, but as the materials for a brief which was to decide the side he was to take in the great assize of life. My first impression was all astray. Mr. Asquith seemed to be a harder man, but also a more resolute one, than he subsequently turned out to be. Mr. Haldane, who accompanied him and introduced him, seemed to me then, if he does not seem to me still, the greater man of the two; possibly the favourable first impression was to some extent in-



fluenced by the combination of a round chubby face less churlish of presenting its sympathetic side, a voice with something of the fat unction of a Free Church divine, and the intellectual calm of a German philosopher on his dreamy heights. Mr. Haldane himself, whether it be to the credit of his modesty or of his penetration, was quite content to play the second fiddle of the party, and left Harrington and myself in no doubt that he regarded Mr. Asquith as the first figure in the Liberalism of the coming time. Mr. Asquith's researches in Dublin were so little finally conclusive that he still wandered for a good many years in the barren places of Lord Rosebery's Liberal League and out of them like a gentleman in search of his political religion, and had not dogmatically settled his creed even when a by no means enamoured Liberal Party called him to the Prime Ministership. All that was known was that his was a debating sword fit to measure itself on even terms with Chamberlain's own on the rare occasions when his foot was stoutly planted and his fighting blood was up. My first distrust of his icy lawyer ways proved to be quite a mistaken one. He never harboured a thought of betraying Ireland. He came to have a genuine affection for the country and an ever-widening appreciation of her aspirations. That his term of office did end in colossal failure and futility was due not to his want of a warm heart, but to his want of a firm will ; to a lack of first-hand knowledge of Ireland which really never until too late went beyond his first experimental trial-trip to the headquarters of the League ; above all, to his deficiency of that power of framing a great scheme of policy and standing by it through thick and thin, in which Campbell-Bannerman, vastly his inferior in intellectual equipment, was as decidedly his superior, and these are the things of statesmanship that matter. I am absolutely convinced that



Mr. Asquith never really knew what he did, when he destroyed the Policy of Conciliation by the Act of 1909, or when for Home Rule for Ireland he substituted Partition. By a singular stroke of fate, the genial development of character which only success revealed in him, turned out to be rather a decadence than a virtue. The roses of Egypt enervated the resolves even of a Mark Antony hardened in the tragedy of the Roman Forum, and the iron wars that followed. The Mr. Asquith in whom even his own followers dreaded a certain Nonconformist austerity and aloofness ended as a supremely good fellow, whose weakness was to be an only too indolent good nature, and whose worst fault was to be an easy indecision. The day when he called in Mr. Lloyd George to relieve him of the burden of seeking an Irish solution he sealed the fate of Home Rule and his own as well.

It is, perhaps, a melancholy compliment to the politician profession to say so, but if Mr. Lloyd George had been Prime Minister instead of Mr. Asquith with all Mr. Asquith's advantages in the Parliament of 1911, he would have carried Home Rule without flinching and Partition would never have been heard of. It was not that he was as great a statesman, but that he was a more painstaking and fearless one. It is not easy to do justice as between Mr. Lloyd George's imagination in conceiving great designs and his unscrupulousness in realizing them. Were he in the saddle as Prime Minister, with a confident majority at his back and the House of Lords under his feet, or, better still, squared, and an Irish Party resourceful to suggest and resolute to have its way, he would have wheedled through or guillotined through a Home Rule Act worth battling for; he would have had the imagination to understand there was a side of the Protestant minority resistance not to be laughed



down as the bluff of "wooden gun-men," or to be disposed of by Mr. Devlin's undertaking to clear the Covenanters out of his path if the police and military would only make a ring and stand aside; but having offered "Ulster" the peace and honour in their own country which Mr. De Valera and Mr. Collins tendered with as lavish a hand in 1921 as we did in 1911, he would have bidden Sir E. Carson, if he still talked of armed resistance, to obey the law like the common citizen of commerce, and we should never have heard of his latter-day "two nations" theory with which he has since lashed a world-wide Irish race into rebellion.

But as Chancellor of the Exchequer, Home Rule was not Mr. Lloyd George's job; and he was never the man to leave the little wares of his own Department unadvertised—no matter how the market ruled. His first daring coup was to cut off for his own share a year out of the new Parliament's five, and that the first year, when energies are freshest. This appropriation for his National Insurance Bill was an impudent injustice to Ireland, to secure "full self-government" for which was the first task for which the Liberals were elected—a purpose which was only to be effected by passing a Home Rule Bill without alteration through three successive sessions of the five available. His feat could never have been attempted without the complaisance of an indolent Prime Minister and a criminally inefficient Irish Party. As we have seen, he had already hitched their waggon to his fortunes by "the great and good Budget" of 1910. The alliance between them was strengthened when he saw his Irish enthusiasts come back from the General Election in undiminished numbers, in spite of the proofs that his and their engagements that Ireland's burden under the Budget would not exceed £400,000 a year had been already falsified and our own estimate of £2,000,000 sub-



stantially realized. It was Ireland's unhappy destiny that the fame of Mr. Lloyd George which was to be the means of subjecting her to many bitter years of betrayal and civil war was mainly of Irish manufacture. The Hibernian stalwarts who raised his "great and good Budget" to the stars, and yelled their delight at every taunt and gibe of his at those of us who strove for the humblest hearing for Ireland's financial claims, now came back to the new Parliament fired with a wilder enthusiasm for Mr. Lloyd George than for any other member of the Home Rule Ministry. Not a protesting voice was raised while the first year of "the Home Rule Parliament" was snatched from Home Rule and devoted to a National Insurance Bill, which Ireland had never demanded—which she even repudiated, through the unanimous voice of the Irish Bishops, as a measure harassing and entirely unsuited to the country. It was Mr. Lloyd George's second playful wrestle with the Irish Party, the Budget of 1910 having been the first. It was also his first trial of strength with his Prime Minister. The result must have been to give him a foretaste of the easy ascendancy over his happy-go-lucky chief, as well as over the Hibernian politicians, which was subsequently to bring the one and the other to their ignominious collapse. The extent of his success can only be measured by imagining his coolly proposing to Gladstone and Parnell to adjourn Home Rule over the first year of a Home Rule Parliament in the interest of a third-rate Departmental Bill!

But the Insurance Bill contained one proviso but for which it is probable the acquiescence of the Irish leaders in Mr. Lloyd George's audacious deal would not have been so tame: it endowed the Board of Erin Hibernians out of public funds with an enormous mass of patronage under a separate Department of their naming, and an organized financial power



extending to every parish in the country. The Bill thenceforth made the Lodges of the Order the official source of emolument and honour in the eyes of the whole prolific family of placehunters and toadies. Mr. Lloyd George's next measure struck much more deeply at the independence of the Irish Party. The secret of the strength of Parnell's Party was its direct contact with and dependence on Irish opinion. Being for the most part poor men, its members found no shame in being aided by the subscriptions of their own countrymen to do the country's business. So long as that business was efficiently done, the country gladly contributed their modest allowances and considered themselves the debtors of their representatives rather than their paymasters in the transaction. The essential point was that the people at home were the fly-wheel which kept the Parliamentary machinery in motion, and were in a position instantly to correct any slackness on the part of their delegates at Westminster. All this was now to be suddenly and stealthily changed. By a simple entry on his Estimates, the Chancellor of the Exchequer proposed to turn the House of Commons into a salaried body enjoying a Treasury subsidy of £400 a year, so long as the Chancellor for the time being chose to renew the estimate. However much may be said (and I think all may be said) for the payment of members by a self-governed State, the proposal to make Irish representatives the stipendiaries of a foreign Government, to wrest Self-Government from whom was their first business in Westminster, was to Irish Nationalists a hateful one, and would have been rejected without hesitation by the country, had it been honestly submitted for their judgment at the General Election. So obviously would this have been the verdict of Irish opinion that the Hibernian Party received the first announcement of Mr. Lloyd



George's estimate with a self-denying resolution which seemed firmly to wave aside the bribe, and reaffirmed the old sound principle that an Irish Party must be content to depend upon the voluntary contributions of their own countrymen. However, having lulled any uneasiness in Ireland to rest by their virtuous protestation, they proceeded, without any further consultation of Irish opinion, to give a unanimous Party vote—and by their vote alone a majority was secured—for the Chancellor of the Exchequer's estimate, on the pitiful plea that in voting themselves their Treasury salaries, they were only voting like sound democrats in the interest of a poor English Labour Party.

The transaction was hustled out of notice in the Hibernian newspapers as ingeniously as through the House of Commons. Probably not one Irishman in a thousand realized that, by a single vote in Committee, the fundamental principle on which the Irish Party was built up of direct accountability to the Irish people, was once for all demolished. But few will now dispute that from the night they voted themselves into Treasury salaries, and thus deprived their constituents of the power of the purse, as the Hibernian organization had already stripped the people of any real voice in their election, may be dated the decadence which was fated to bring the Parliamentary movement from one stage of deterioration to another to its final extinguishment by the consenting voice of a whole race. It would be unjust to suppose that any outside a very scurvy but very small inner ring of that Party were influenced by any sordid personal interest in their Parliamentary subsidies, still less that they foresaw the door they were opening to more painful fallings-away which were to follow, when swearing that they'd ne'er consent, they consented to eat the Lloyd George forbidden fruit. But it was that very inability to



foresee the ultimate—sometimes even the immediate—consequences of their action which stamped the leadership of the National movement in those momentous years with an irredeemable taint of incapacity, and made the Party easy tools of Mr. Lloyd George, in whatever uses he chose to put them to from his first Budget wizardries to his final Partition Act.

The alliance formed between Mr. Lloyd George and Sir Edward Carson completed the supremacy of Mr. Lloyd George and the bedevilment of Home Rule. The event was due to Mr. Asquith's inconceivable weakness in admitting to one of the highest posts in his Cabinet a man whose preparations for civil war in Ulster notoriously incited the Kaiser to precipitate the conflagration that covered the world. More amazingly still, this transformation of the potential rebel into a chief ruler of the Empire passed without a protesting word from the Irish Party, who, without exacting any conditions for the future of Home Rule, either from the Coalition Government or from Sir E. Carson, permitted the Ministry of the Home Rule majority to be dissolved and its place taken by a Coalition Cabinet of which (Mr. Lloyd George being still a dark horse) the two most potent members were the two most potent enemies of Ireland—Sir E. Carson and Mr. Bonar Law. The offer to Mr. Redmond of an insignificant Postmaster-Generalship by way of counterpoise was an almost contemptuous aggravation of the wrong with which the friendliness of Ireland at the outset of the war was repaid, with the connivance of her own representatives. In his new character as Minister of Munitions, Mr. Lloyd George was not long in recognizing in the Ulster and Unionist leaders his most valuable coadjutors in the Coalition Government, and the inevitable result of the combination is told in Col. Repington's Diary, revealing



the means and the men by which Mr. Asquith was overthrown in the Cabinet of his own making :

" Sunday. Decr. 3, 1916.—Last Friday began a great internal crisis when L. G. wrote to the P(ri)me M(in)ister that he could not go on unless our methods of waging war were speeded up. He proposed a War Council of Three, including himself, Bonar Law, and Carson. The two latter are with him, which means the Unionists, too."—(*The First World War*, Vol. 1, p. 403.)

Mr. Lloyd George came out on top, and he was neither sufficiently stupid, nor sufficiently ungrateful, ever to forget the two men who were the pillars of his greatness. From the new Triple Alliance (once more established in power with the uncomplaining assent of an invertebrate Irish Party)<sup>1</sup> may be dated not merely Sir E. Carson's triumphant escape from his responsibilities for the war in the eyes of the British people, but his henceforth unquestioned mastery of the Irish policy of the Coalition. In the early stages of the Home Rule Bill, so far as Mr. Lloyd George had discovered Ulster at all, it was rather to play up to the delicate Hibernian *facetiae* at the expense of her wooden guns and her game of bluff and bluster. We may be sure that when the Bill was introduced in 1912, he would as soon have anticipated the day when he would commit the *Mabinogion* to the flames or denounce Llewellyn as an historic imposture as that he would presently be found denying the very existence of an Irish Nation more bitterly than Sir Edward Carson. Like

<sup>1</sup> The All-for-Ireland members found all parties combined in ruling out the smallest mention of the matter in the House. Nothing could have prevented the Irish Party any night they chose from moving the Adjournment in order to discuss it; but they sat dumb. They would only have recovered their voices for a roar of exultant derision, if we had tried to get the necessary 40 members to rise and failed.



Lord Randolph Churchill, he only discovered Ulster when it served his politician's purpose, and he not unnaturally placed pretty high Sir Edward Carson's price as an ally in matters that more concerned him. It was Sir Edward Carson and Mr. Bonar Law who had raised him to his dizzy height of power, and it was the cheapest of exchanges to be thenceforth their obedient servant in the affairs of Ireland.

As unscrupulous as you please—although doubtless softened to his conscience by the thought that he was saving the Empire in a great emergency as well as carrying his own ambitions to the stars—but if from that time forth it became certain that a Partition scheme dictated by Sir Edward Carson and Mr. Bonar Law was the only possible settlement to be offered to Ireland—if for years after the Irish Parliamentary Party had passed away, no acceptable terms of truce could be offered to Sinn Féin, until the two countries had been shocked with all the horrors of civil war—it must never be left out of sight that it was only because the indulgent *bonhomie* of Mr. Asquith had enabled Sir Edward Carson to meet his co-conspirators on an equal footing in his Cabinet, and because the triumph of the conspiracy received the mute assent of an Irish Party, who had already accepted the very Partition scheme which Sir Edward Carson eventually carried into law.



## CHAPTER V

## HOW "ULSTER" BECAME THE DIFFICULTY

EVEN instructed Irishmen are to this day without any clue to the riddle why Ireland, described (a little extravagantly) by Sir E. Grey at the outbreak of the World-War as "the one bright spot on the horizon," should, before many months were over, break out in rebellion and abandon Parliamentary methods altogether. The change was far from being as sudden or as fickle as it seemed. The discredit long undermining the Parliamentary movement did, to an amazing degree, escape public observation, but it was because the Press of the two countries, for opposite reasons which will be found disclosed in these pages, combined to keep the British public in entire ignorance, and the mass of the Irish people in an ignorance scarcely less tragic, of the deep stirrings of opinion that were all the time at work under the surface.

For example, it was the consent of the Hibernian leaders to the first suggestions of Partition which was the root-cause of Sir Edward Carson's ascendancy in the counsels of British Cabinets: that was, also, the secret of the disgust with the Parliamentary politicians, long fermenting in the bosoms of the young generation, which found its first wild explosion in the insurrection of Easter Week. But of this either the public never heard, or only preserve a memory slipshod beyond all the usual freaks of that treacherous medium. Many are under the impression that the exclusion of "Ulster" was only submitted to by Mr. Redmond and his friends under



the pressure of the World-War, and of a Coalition Government ; it was, in truth, accepted in principle many months before a war with Germany was in the thoughts of any of the parties concerned, and while a Home Rule Government, expressly elected to "give full self-government to Ireland"—all Ireland—was still in possession of its majority of more than 90 in the House of Commons, and of an irresistible means of silencing the House of Lords. Many more allowed themselves to be persuaded that the exclusion was only offered because it was known that "Ulster" would reject it, and that it was, in any case, to be only a temporary arrangement for six years. Two other gross impositions on public credulity ; for the exclusion was from the first moment grasped at by Sir E. Carson and Mr. Bonar Law, if only as the least of two evils, and so little was it to be "temporary" in its operation that the Hibernian leaders fully closed with it after the Home Rule Prime Minister had in their presence avowed that it was an exclusion never to be repealed without a fresh Act of the Imperial Parliament. Nay, there is a sleepy public which has managed to forget altogether that Partition was ever sanctioned by seven-eighths of the Nationalist representatives of Ireland, and would be horrified to be awakened to the fact that they agreed to surrender to Sir Edward Carson precisely the same Six Counties which Mr. Lloyd George afterwards separated from Ireland in his Partition Act of 1921, and that the Nationalists of the Six Counties themselves were forced by the Hibernian leaders in public Convention to ratify the bargain, and to be thus made consenting parties to their own denationalization, and to all the horrors that followed it. To these fundamental truths and to many others, the general public was, and is, blind, or what is worse, purblind.



Under these circumstances, it becomes a duty of supreme historic interest to trace the true genesis of the Ulster Difficulty and its progress to Partition under the joint mismanagement of a fumbling Liberal administration and of its sinister Hibernian bear-leaders. The narrative will throw a revealing light upon the whole story of Ireland ever since—the statutable recognition of the two-nation theory in substitution for the ideal of Ireland a Nation—the falling to pieces of the Parliamentary movement of its own decay and rottenness—and the years of bitter agony that came after, when the Republican idealists of a new generation gave unstintedly of their young blood in the endeavour to redeem the pitiful errors of their elders.

That mismanagement there was, gross as a mountain, is placed beyond controversy, by the confessions of Mr. Lloyd George and Sir E. Grey, already quoted. What plea has British statesmanship to offer, why wisdom did not come to them in 1912, when Mr. Asquith's Home Rule Bill was being framed, but only nine years afterwards when the Act was expunged from the Statute-Book without a protesting voice from any side, to be succeeded by an Act more disastrous still? Their most plausible defence is that they were constitutionally bound to follow the guidance of the majority of the representatives of the nation they were enfranchising. All save eight of these representatives jauntily assured them there was no longer an Ulster Difficulty, the alarms of the Protestant minority were imaginary, the threats of armed resistance were part of a gigantic game of bluff which could without difficulty be disposed of by the police, or, for that matter, by the Hibernian mob in the streets of Belfast, if the police and military would only stand aside. It is a defence which has been more than once pleaded by Mr. Lloyd George. However pedantically



defensible from the constitutional point of view, this repudiation of responsibility is more worthy of Party Whips than of statesmen charged with an international task of the first moment. Let the blame be bandied about as it may between the three Hibernian leaders and their Liberal entertainers at the famous breakfast party in Downing Street, the fact stands that the Bill which emerged from their deliberations did not contain in its forty-eight clauses a single provision to satisfy, or even to recognize the existence of those deep-lying discontents of more than a million of the Irish population which were afterwards to make shipwreck of the Home Rule Government and of their Bill, and to start a new and more virulent blood-feud between the two countries, if not in a very considerable degree to precipitate the world-wide conflagration from whose effects civilization is still staggering.

How came it that a body of Irishmen not wanting in ability, or in a patriotism of their own, could have displayed a lack of vision so incurable, or an insensibility so callous to the interests and passionate emotions of one-fourth of their countrymen? The puzzle, otherwise incomprehensible, becomes simple enough when we call to mind the transformation the Irish Party had been undergoing for the previous nine years. Ever since the revolt against the Land Conference settlement of 1903, the Party had been taught to regard that union of parties and classes which had peacefully abolished Landlordism, and might have abolished English rule with still less difficulty by the same means, as an unmitigated national misfortune. Every attempt to re-establish that solidarity of Irishmen of all racial and religious origins which had already wrought such wonders, was regarded by the new leaders of the Party with distrust and aversion as a conspiracy of "rotten Protestants and rotten Catholics" to displace the



Party from their hold upon the country and betray them into the hands of Heaven knows what fantastic combination in a "Centre Party" of swindling Irish landlords, English Tory Ministers, and Nationalist traitors. The moment the propagators of these libels were brought to book before a Limerick jury, they either fled the witness-chair altogether, like Mr. Dillon, or made a piteous breakdown under cross-examination, like Mr. Sexton. Each and every one of the six portentous charges they dared to put in concrete form was declared to be a false and defamatory libel, and to have been published with malice. Unashamed by the exposure, they persisted, although with a more cautious eye to the law of libel, in re-hinting and re-insinuating every item in this tissue of ridiculous fables, hunting down the Irish Unionists of the new school with all the more malignity the further they advanced towards Irish National ideals, and the greater was their success in attracting their brother Protestants to follow in their train, while they branded as manifest traitors every Nationalist who did not join in the hunt. The Irish country gentlemen and city merchants—always a sensitive and timorous folk on the political stage—were quite successfully intimidated from taking the plunge of open conversion to the National side by the coarse imputations upon their honour, their family history, and their racial and religious traditions, which had been the only reward of the first of their class who had been the pioneers. After which, with a scrupulousness all their own, the libellers who had treated the sympathetic welcome extended by the All-for-Ireland League to the new school of Irish Unionists as some unspeakable crime against Ireland, now made the success of their own intimidation an audacious argument how completely all the efforts of the All-for-Ireland League to conciliate the Irish Unionist minority had been a failure



Had a different temper prevailed, few will now doubt that the mass of the Irish Unionists might have been long ago incorporated in a United Ireland, and the opposition reduced to a narrow strip of territory around Belfast. Even N. E. Ulster, a patient and indulgent tolerance must have irresistibly brought back to its old allegiance to the principles of Grattan's Volunteers and of the United Irishmen. That the anticipation was not a too sanguine one, is testified by the eagerness with which great county meetings of magistrates and Deputy Lieutenants and of the industrialists and captains of commerce in the cities gave in their adhesion to Home Rule fifteen years later on the first symptoms that their co-operation would be genuinely welcomed. Their adhesion and the genuine welcome unluckily came too late. I have often heard honest country gentlemen and Protestant merchants and farmers lament that their leaders had not the moral courage to rally manfully to our ranks, before Sir E. Carson had formed his army of dour Ulster bigots and thrown the Southern Unionists to the wolves. They hesitated and were lost. Even a number of young Irish Unionists who had graduated in Lord Dunraven's school of patriotism, and who were not to be frightened by intimidation, allowed themselves to succumb to the subtler temptation of seats in Parliament to transfer their services to the side of immediate power and patronage. Young men of excellent gifts like Mr. Walter MacMurrough Kavanagh, Mr. Stephen Gwynn, Mr. Hugh Law, and Mr. Shane Leslie, might have become the honoured leaders of a re-awakened Protestant patriotism had they chosen the harder part of representing the traditions of their own rank and creed and brought their co-religionists with them to a higher plane of National ambition. They were content instead to merge themselves in the little



group of tame Protestant Home Rulers maintained for obvious reasons at Westminster as the nominees of a Hibernian Party to whose inner rites their religion forbade their admission.

But a vastly more formidable, and, indeed, an impassable barrier to the conciliation of the Protestant minority was raised by the fundamental transformation of the United Irish movement itself from a national to a sectarian one. For generations Irish Protestants, far from accepting the position of aliens in Ireland's undying fight for liberty, had supplied the major part of its poetry and eloquence, had been its leaders and soldiers and martyrs. When the United Irish League was founded in 1898 to recreate the country's forces, shattered by the Parnell Split of 1890, the basis and first article of its Constitution was copied from that of Wolfe Tone's Society of United Irishmen, mostly Protestants and Dissenters, who pledged themselves "to promote a union of power, friendship, and affection between Irishmen of every religious persuasion." Men who had no part in the foundation of the United Irish League—who, in truth, bitterly resented its intrusion because it put an end to the impotent rivalries of the Parliamentary factions into which the Parnell movement had broken up—had no sooner insinuated themselves into power in the new organization than they proceeded to subvert its first principle of the broadest religious and political equality and paved the way towards its perversion into a squalid confederacy of Catholic place-hunters. The Irish world would have quite certainly risen up in horror against the design had they known, or even suspected, that the effect would be to ostracise from the national ranks, unless on terms of inequality intolerable to men of honour, the co-religionists of the Grattans, Wolfe Tones, Emmets, Davises, and Parnells, whose names had been for a century and a half the most sacred in their political hagiology.



The change was accomplished in secrecy and with considerable craft, and, needless to say, only after the founders of the League had withdrawn or been driven out. The public organization of the United Irish League, with its broad maxims of civil and religious equality and fraternity, was carefully maintained as the ostensible organ of the movement, but its offices were filled, its democratic Executives in every Division overrun, and its funds brought under the control of a new and secret organization without the authority of any mandate from the nation. The pith and vigour of the public League were gradually absorbed by the occult power, as, in some tale of mediæval sorcery, the witch's own changeling waxed and grew while the legitimate infant pined and fell away. The National President of the "Board of Erin" Hibernians became the paid Secretary of the United Irish League, and from an humble employment in Belfast rose to be a Member of Parliament and the omnipotent "Chief Secretary for Ireland." The Assistant-Secretaryship fell to another of the Secret Order, the Standing Committee, or supreme governing body of the League, was stuffed with a majority of Hibernians, its staff of organizers were recruited from the Hibernian Lodges, but paid out of the United Irish League's funds, and were despatched all over the country, with the nominal mission of addressing decorous Branches of the League, whose irreproachable sentiments were duly reported in the newspapers, but in reality with the object of turning them into so many obsequious servants of the Board of Erin. Before very long the United Irish League had virtually ceased to exist save as an innocuous dead-wall for posting up resolutions and appealing for funds; the resolutions were dictated, and the funds gathered in by the officials and organizers of the Board of Erin.



The new danger to the Irish Cause originated in Belfast in that stifling atmosphere of religious rancour which, ever since the destruction of Grattan's Parliament, dried up the generous current of Protestant patriotism, and poisoned the life of all denominations of its people. The obscure history of the Ancient Order of Hibernians may be traced back to the secret association of Defenders forced into existence by the first diabolical schemes for the extermination of the Catholic peasantry of Armagh which signalled the foundation of Orangeism by the plotters of the Union. The new organization of the Board of Erin had, of course, no relationship with those ancient blood-feuds between creed and creed, beyond adopting for themselves the pet-name of "The Mollies," invented for some unknown Ribbon band, who used to make the shebeen-shop of one Molly Maguire the headquarters of their midnight operations in the gallant wars of the Catholic Defenders. The essential vice of the Board of Erin Hibernians, in fact, was that they had no comprehensible object which could be publicly stated, until their real purpose came to be at last made only too manifest to be that of a gigantic pseudo-Catholic combination for the distribution of all offices, power, and emoluments among its exclusively Catholic partisans.

The genuine Ancient Order of Hibernians in America, from which the Board of Erin were seceders, was a perfectly legitimate Friendly Society, which expended its resources upon noble works of benevolence—the foundation of a famous Catholic University, of Catholic Orphanages and Asylums, and the like—but never put forward any pretension to control or sectarianise the Irish National movement. The Board of Erin, too, found it expedient to assume the guise of an authorised Friendly Society as a plausible excuse for their



existence for very different objects, but that was only after Mr. Lloyd George's Insurance Act of 1911 had placed at the disposal of the Board of Erin Hibernians a separate Irish Insurance Department commanding an enormous mass of patronage covering Commissioners, Inspectors, Doctors, Law Agents, and clerks, extending over every parish in the country.

The pretence that the aggressive Catholicism of the Board of Erin was necessitated in order to defend any real interests of religion was without a shred of justification. They had no more a mandate from ecclesiastical authority for their Catholicism than from the democracy of Ireland for their political domination. As it happened, their first considerable incursion into Irish public life was Mr. Devlin's crusade against the Bishop of Down and Connor (Dr. Henry) on the very ground that the Bishop had started a Catholic Association for the defence of purely religious local interests in Belfast. It is one of life's little ironies that the local Catholic Association for whose foundation Dr. Henry was made to go down to his grave in sorrow was afterwards copied by his persecutors on a vaster scale and without a vestige of his justification, in their own scheme for sectarianising the national politics of the entire country. The new champions of Catholicity were so little to the taste of Rome that Propaganda issued an instruction to the Irish Bishops that the new organization of the Board of Erin was to be "vigilantly watched." It long lay under sentence of excommunication in its Scottish province, and the interdict was only raised on the undertaking to drop for the future the blasphemous form of initiation, which was to make the postulant repeat his vows of secrecy, with his hand laid upon a crucifix. The moral valuation of its membership in the North was sufficiently appraised in a Visitation Sermon of



Cardinal Logue in Tyrone in which he declared the Hibernian Order in the parish he was visiting to have become "a pest, a cruel tyranny, and an organized system of blackguardism," and threatened that if his present admonitions had no effect "he would in the exercise of his duty excommunicate the Hibernians throughout his Archdiocese." Thus, the Board of Erin entered upon its career of devastation under the cloak of Catholicism not only without a particle of sanction from the Catholic Church, but on the contrary under the disapproval and menace of its highest dignitary. The Cardinal's words, had they been followed up, must soon have reduced the new "pest" to powerlessness and contempt in the North. Unhappily, the suspicions of the Protestant Minority, so far from being dissipated, were gravely confirmed when they found that the secret society which on its first coming engaged the patronage of only one astute and ambitious Prelate in the island, and was stigmatised as "an organised system of blackguardism" by the Cardinal, came eventually to be propagated throughout Ireland with the blessings of a goodly company of Bishops, Chaplains, and Spiritual Directors, and that even many who in their hearts detested it as an organ of Catholic opinion could not always resist the temptation of blessing its victorious banners with the easy versatility of the Vicar of Bray.

This, then, was the change in the whole framework and spirit of the National movement which forced itself upon the minds of Irish Protestants and filled them with disquiet and alarm. The movement had passed into the control of a Secret Order, to which nobody who was not a Catholic was admissible, and of which partaking of the Blessed Sacrament of the Catholic Church was another of the requirements. The voice in public might still be the voice of the United Irish League,



but the hand was the hand of the mysterious Board of Erin, who had captured its offices and organizers and the control of its funds. The axiom of "Union and Friendship between Irishmen of every religious persuasion," emblazoned on the banner of the United Irish League as the first article of its creed, was torn down and trampled in the dust. Every Irish Protestant who manifested National tendencies was repulsed with coarse insults. Those Nationalists who pleaded for welcome, or even toleration, for them within the Nationalist fold were not saved by life-long devotion to the National Cause from being themselves ostracised as traitors and "rotten Catholics," and prevented by physical violence and bloodshed, whenever necessary, from obtaining a hearing from their countrymen. "The Party" itself was not free from the espionage of the Board of Erin bosses, who held the public opinion of the country by the throat. Those of them who ventured even to exchange a furtive greeting with an All-for-Ireland colleague in the sacred lobbies of the House of Commons found themselves pricked down for destruction at the next elections. And the men who exercised this odious tyranny were not only in a position to nominate disciples who could exchange their own grips and passwords as Members of Parliament, of the Corporations, County Councils, and District Councils. They were soon all-powerful enough to turn down their thumbs against every candidate for office from the highest places in the judiciary or in Dublin Castle to the humblest rural sinecure, who failed to attorn to their decrees. There is expert evidence for the calculation that the Board of Erin was eventually in possession of patronage to the amount of three millions sterling per annum for distribution among their brethren.

It did not lessen the discontents of the Minority that the Orange leaders were not in a position to expatiate in public upon the enormities of "The



Mollies," since the spirit and the methods of the two Orders were substantially the same. The Orangemen, like "The Mollies," throve upon the narrowest bigotry, the frankest craving for place-getting and pelf, with an invincible determination to restrict the good things to those of their own kidney; and it was the Orangemen who first set the detestable example. But therein lay the deadly disservice done to the National Cause by those who established the Board of Erin ascendancy; for the Board of Erin Order, without a shadow of honest justification, created in the twentieth century a new ascendancy, differing but in colour from the pestilent Orange tyranny established in Ulster in the eighteenth. As in the foundation of Orangeism, it was the worst of the Protestant body who prevailed over the best; so in the sham-Catholic ascendancy now substituted for it, it was the most ignorant elements of the Catholic community who gave the most ignorant of the Protestants a new lease of power by throwing the mass of the sober-minded Protestant and Dissenting population into their arms for protection. It was of no avail to point out to fanatical, or even to reasoning Protestants how monstrous an injustice the cry of "Home Rule—Rome Rule" did to a Catholic nation whose whole history breathed the broadest and tenderest toleration. The Board of Erin put a convenient reply in the mouths of honest doubters, who feared for the future of their children in a Hibernian-ridden Ireland, as well as of those with whom the breeding of evil party-passions was a profession. The new ascendancy was in actual operation in the daily life of the country, and it spared neither those Protestant Unionists who had ceased to be Unionists, nor tolerant Catholics who would have welcomed them to the National fold with gladness. Sir E. Carson got his chance, and the Ulster Difficulty entered into the deepest life of the Protestant population.



## CHAPTER VI

## THE TWO POLICIES IN ACTION

It must not be supposed that the mistake concerning the Protestant Minority which "The Home Rule Cabinet" now mournfully acknowledges was made for lack of incessant forewarnings and entreaties, or that those of us who now point the moral of its unwisdom are, like the Ministers themselves, only wise after the event. At each successive stage of the controversy—under a Tory Government, under a Liberal Government, and under a Coalition Government alike—we of the All-for-Ireland school can claim without presumption to have iterated and reiterated, with moderation and solemnity, but without wavering, that any true Irish settlement must be sought by a combination of all Irish and English parties for an object loftier than party strategy, and above all that delicate deference must be paid to the traditional particularities and even prejudices of Ulster. Two further propositions may be respectfully postulated as matters of common agreement by this time: viz. (*a*) that there is not one of our detailed suggestions—for years held in derision and for a parable of reproach to us as factionist and traitorous—which would not now be recognised as concessions of such obvious good sense as to seem commonplace, and (*b*) that up to a certain date they would have been closed with by Ulster as a satisfaction of all the reasonable requirements and apprehensions of the Protestant minority.

To make good this claim, it may be convenient once for all to set out the terms of the Settlement



by Consent which we proposed in the very words in which I challenged the verdict of the city of Cork, and which I was returned without an opposing voice to press upon the Government. It will be seen that they cover the three points on which "the apprehensions of our Protestant countrymen and not in Ulster alone" were most sensitive.

"1. (*The Ulster terror of parting with the active authority of the Imperial Parliament.*)—We propose, for an experimental term of five years, to give the Ulster Party which would remain in the Imperial Parliament (say ten, with the possible addition of two members, one for Trinity College, and one for Rathmines, to represent the Southern minority) a direct suspensory veto upon any Bill of the Irish Parliament unless and until it shall either be approved or rejected by a resolution of the Imperial Parliament, to be passed within one month after the exercise of the Veto. Further, to give the Ulster Party the right upon a signed requisition to the Speaker of discussing on a motion for the adjournment of the House of Commons, any administrative Act of the Irish Executive dealing with Education, Justice, or Police. For the experimental period, these powers would give the Protestant minority the direct and active protection of the Imperial Parliament in a much more effectual way than they possess it at present. Such a suspensory veto may seem an unheard-of concession to a minority, and so it is. It would in my judgment be gladly submitted to by the best thinking men of our race, in the belief that it would serve as a wholesome restraint upon an infant Parliament in its first inexperienced years, and in the firm conviction that nothing will be attempted which would either tempt the Ulster Party to exercise the Veto or the Imperial Parliament to enforce it. The concession would, of course, be unendurable unless (failing a fresh Act of the Imperial



Parliament for its renewal) it were to expire at the end of the experimental period, by which time a General Election will have been undergone and the new Imperial Parliament placed in a position to judge of the Irish Legislature by its actual record.

"2. (*The insignificance of the minority in a Dublin Parliament.*)—As the Bill stands, the Ulster group will undoubtedly be a somewhat attenuated one, as it is bound to be by a pedantic adherence to existing geographical boundaries. Nor would any fancy property franchise be, to my mind, tolerable in the popular chamber under modern democratic conditions. We should propose to deal, unsymmetrically but effectively, with the question of giving the Protestant minority a representation proportioned to their numbers and their natural claim for adequate protection by increasing the proposed representation in the Schedule to 20 for Belfast, 16 for Antrim, 8 for Armagh, 16 for Down, and 8 for Londonderry, which with a proportional vote (or, better still, a cumulative vote) extended to the rest of the country would yield a Protestant minority vote of at least 60 in the Irish House of Commons. Here you would have established a body which could not possibly be put down by oppressive means, and which would only have to win the adhesion of some 30 Catholic Nationalists at the utmost to form a governing majority upon a National Peace programme which would efface all the old distinctions. What a career of unhopcd-for power and noble patriotism for the present Unionist Minority, whom the Imperial Parliament has stripped of every vestige of political power over four-fifths of the country and can never by any possibility of its own authority restore it! Sensible Irishmen would make little difficulty about assenting in addition to such local powers as, apparently, Sir E. Grey would delegate to Ulster—appointments, for instance, of County Court judges,



Inspectors of Education and County Inspectors of Police from competent panels—either by the Ulster County Councils or some other local authorities, but these would be quite insufficient inducements in themselves, and would be happily overshadowed by the larger concessions which would attract Ulster centripetally to, instead of repelling her from, the National Parliament.

“3. (*The fears of a Spoils system worked by a twopenny-ha’penny Tammany.*)—The Unionist minority are not the only Irish minority who regard with repugnance the ascendancy of a Secret Association confined to men of one particular religious persuasion, and using as its most powerful instrument the disposal of all offices and patronage from the highest to the lowest, not according to the merits of the candidates, but according to their proficiency in the signs and passwords of the Order. The growth of this sectarian organisation (whose object nobody has yet ventured publicly to put into words) is indeed responsible for the creation of three-fourths of the Ulster Difficulty which now darkens the horizon. I am confident that most of the far-seeing supporters of Mr. Redmond must be in their hearts as anxious as either the Ulster Minority or the Munster Minority to put an end to any danger from this undemocratic secret agency by having provision made that all offices of emolument (save only Ministers, Heads of Departments, and Judges) should be disposed of by a carefully chosen body of Irish Civil Service Commissioners who should throw them open to all candidates upon equal terms, and put an end to the scandal of dispensing Government patronage in partisan newspaper offices by sectarian preferences and secret intrigues.”

These proposals were never made public by the Hibernian Press, nor by any newspaper in England. The only version of them circulated in three-fourths



of Ireland was that I proposed to "hand over Ireland to the veto of twelve Orangemen"—the only justification for that atrocious libel being the proposal for an experimental period of five years, to give a minority of a million the security of a possible appeal to the Imperial Parliament, to be decided within one month, under circumstances which made it all but certain that, by reason of the very completeness of the security, the power would never be exercised. And this moderate price to purchase the confidence of one-fourth of the Irish population was held up to execration as "handing over Ireland to the veto of twelve Orangemen"—that, too, in a Home Rule Bill which, in the words of Mr. T. P. O'Connor, "contained as many English vetoes as there were padlocks in a jail." Who can wonder if a country debarred from all chance of reading our proposals for themselves and so infamously led astray as to their real purport, should have taken half a generation of suffering to learn that the "factionists and traitors" were "fundamentally right" all along? For ourselves, so little did we claim any special foresight in discerning the possibilities of an incomparable National settlement in "an agreement amongst all sections, creeds, and classes of Irishmen," that the only clue we could find to the enigma how any sane body of Irishmen could detect in it any trace of treason to Ireland was that those who only saw in the Land Conference settlement "a landlord swindle" infallibly bound to "end in national insolvency" felt themselves now constrained to persist in the error at any cost against all evidence and commonsense.

Stand fast by our proposal, at all events, we did from start to finish against all the buffets of unpopularity and of carefully nurtured ignorance in Ireland and in England. Persons familiar with the state of feeling in the Ulster Party, and especially



among the mass of the Northern population, prior to the Larne gun-running, will scarcely deny that "a Bill thus conceived, far from being a grievance in the sight of embittered Irish Protestants, would have been hailed by them as an Act of Political Emancipation such as the Imperial Parliament could never otherwise secure to them." But what of its reception by the Republicans? They were not then in existence, and with wiser counsels they might never have been, in any ponderable numbers. The opposition came from the self-aggrandising place-hunters of the Board of Erin; the clean-souled adolescents who were to be the rebels of Easter Week had not yet been made sick with the cajoleries of the Parliamentary politicians, and would see no more trace of treason to Ireland in our doctrines than in Davis's genial version of the Orange war-song, "The Battle of the Boyne," which they had been taught to lisp from their cradles:

" Boyne's old water,  
Red with slaughter,  
Now is as pure as the children at play;  
So, in our souls,  
Its history rolls,  
Orange and Green will carry the day!"<sup>1</sup>

From the poorest standpoint of expediency, there stood one-fourth of the Irish population who must either be lived with or exterminated. The latter course was, happily, as impossible as it would have been heathenish. It would have expelled from the service of Ireland a leisured class of soldiers, sportsmen, and genial comrades as ineradicably Irish as a free admixture of Gaelic blood for centuries could make them, and an industrial population whose

<sup>1</sup> "I would go as far as ever you went to win over Ulster," Mr. De Valera told me in 1922.



energy, probity, and solidity of character would endow an Irish State with some of its most precious elements of stability. To acknowledge that there were two unmixable Irelands would be to fly in the face of some of the most shining truths of our history. Gaelic Ireland's ethnic genius had never found any difficulty, even as late as the Williamite wars, in fascinating and absorbing all the successive invaders who, in conquering, were themselves conquered—the Norman Geraldines in Munster and the Norman Burkes in Connacht, the Danes in Dublin, the Scotsmen in Dalriada, the Belgians in Wexford, the Welshmen in Tyrawley, the grim Cromwellians themselves amidst the bewitching homes of Tipperary. The beadroll of statutes from century to century forbidding the adventurers from England—and forbidding them in vain—to “live Irishly” and take Irish wives, is one long English protestation of the homogeneity of the nation. Even the era of the diabolical Penal Laws, if it raised up fiends to debase the Catholic Gaels almost out of human shape into a separate race, “in the English and Protestant interest,” produced also a dynasty of Protestant patriots as truly Irish as the eternal mountains that towered over Henry Grattan's woods at Tinnahinch. Flood was the only man of genius in the Irish Parliament who represented anti-Catholic bigotry at its darkest; yet even he made atonement for that one sunspot in his character by the will in which he left a considerable property for the encouragement of the study of Gaelic in Trinity College and the publication of the ancient manuscript literature of the Gael. With the graces and accomplishments of a cultured Irish nobleman, Charlemont strangely mingled in his character a gloomy Protestant bigotry; yet he, too, was so passionate a fanatic for Irish liberty that, as Commander-in-Chief of Grattan's Volunteers, his prepa-



rations for a war against the Parliament of England were more formidable than Sir E. Carson's more than a century later, and were authorised by sounder constitutional warrant. The man whom the English intellectual world now acclaim as the most sublime of their philosophers and statesmen was the Irish Protestant, Edmund Burke, who, for the inspired eloquence with which he scathed England's doings in Ireland, went within an ace of being slain by the Gordon rioters as an Irish papist adventurer. To tear out from the journals of the Irish Parliament the splendid pages which record the Protestant struggle for Irish freedom from Molyneux' first daring claims to the dying hours in which it succumbed to the Act of Union—to disown the romantic chapters added to our story by the Protestant Wolfe Tone when, after Parliamentary methods had failed, he appealed to the God of battles, and to disown them because the martyrs who died at his call on the scaffolds of Belfast and Carrickfergus and at Antrim Fight were Protestant Dissenters who had not taken the Catholic Sacrament—would be to cancel the entire history of Ireland since the Middle Ages, and has only to be set out in cold terms of logic to excite the abhorrence of every Catholic Nationalist with an uncorrupted heart.

Irish Protestant patriotism did not die even under the scalpel of Castlereagh's Act of Union. Lecky, whom certain family sufferings during the Land War unhappily alienated from the Irish Cause in his declining years, has left us in his books an immortal monument of the inborn Nationalism of the Irish Protestant genius. It would be scarcely possible for prejudice itself to study the unexpurgated edition of his *Leaders of Public Opinion in Ireland* without being convinced that religious rancour was steadily disappearing in the generous sunheat of Grattan's Parliament and was only resus-



citated after the Union when the contagion of the Evangelical Revival in England spread in a virulent form to the North of Ireland. Dr. Boulter, the English Archbishop of Armagh, owns with frank brutality how truly religious feuds in Ireland are the product of English policy and not of native perversity, when, inveighing against every measure "that tends to unite Protestant with Papist," he adds, "whenever that happens, good-bye to the English interest in Ireland for ever." And the Union gave England the means of fomenting the war of creeds in Ireland during the bitter generation for which the Catholic Emancipation, more than half accomplished by the Irish Parliament during the Viceroyalty of Lord Fitzwilliam, was obliged to prolong its hate-engendering debates in the Parliament of England. Even so, the unquenchable embers of Protestant patriotism flared up again and again in Ulster itself. Too little is known of Gavan Duffy's "*League of the North and South*," in whose ranks the mass of the Protestant Dissenters and their clerical leaders in the Fifties were, beyond question eager to join hands with their Catholic countrymen, and which was only crushed by the apostacy of the ruffians, Keogh and Sadleir, unluckily condoned by the simplicity of two or three Catholic prelates. So much an affair of yesterday is the Ulster Protestant *bloc* which Sir E. Carson managed to persuade England was ancient and unbreakable, that within living recollection the Dissenters, who formed the weightier half of Sir E. Carson's Covenanters, were wholly at one with the Catholics on the two questions—religious disabilities and the land—which were the staple interest of their lives, and were the active allies of the Catholics in every electioneering and democratic campaign against the other half--the Episcopalian Tories. So late as 1885, it was Presbyterian votes that returned Justin MacCarthy for the City of Derry,



and Mr. Tim Healy for South Derry, and myself for South Tyrone.

For one like myself, who as a boy had followed Smith O'Brien—the flower of Irish knighthood—to his grave; who esteemed it the glory of his youth to have been asked by John Mitchel to compose his Election Address to Tipperary; who had seen Isaac Butt and Professor Galbraith reconstruct a broad-based national movement from the ruins of Fenianism, and later on followed Parnell to the very Jordan's brink of Irish Independence—it can easily be imagined how little disposed I was to disown the co-religionists of men such as these as a tribe of unmixable aliens and pariahs. To be accused of some monstrous heresy against Ireland for the bare proposal to incorporate that million of religiously-minded, laborious, and stout-hearted men everlastingly in our nation on terms of equality and honour, might well seem the prank of some practical joker, if it were not unhappily the stock-in-trade of powerful politicians trading upon the boundless ignorance of the truth in which they were able to keep the public. It cannot be denied that it was an experience of grievous personal pain, as well as of public misfortune, but it can truly be claimed that, if ever I was in danger of sinking under the injustice, I had only to re-read the story of the generous measure in which the Protestant Parliament parted with their privileges and ascendancy in the Relief Bill of 1793 to redeem their Catholic brother-Irishmen from their degradation—of the all but unanimity of the Protestant Bar for a Catholic Emancipation which would put an end to their monopoly—of the glowing words in which the youth of Trinity College threw open their arms to the Catholic claims—of the twenty-eight years during which Grattan and Plunkett pressed their unflinching battle for Emancipation in a brutalized English



Parliament, before a Catholic Irishman could pass its portals ; and, before the page was turned down, the spirits of the Protestants of genius who had suffered persecution of their own for their noble constancy to the friendless Catholic helot, seemed to be sufficiently near to make it a sacred privilege for Irish Catholics to suffer in the converse sense now, when there was question of a different ascendancy and of different victims. Persecution at the hands of our own household, at all events, never weakened our determination to resist any counter-ascendancy in the hour of triumph for the Catholics as stoutly as the leaders of Grattan's Parliament and of the United Irishmen met and overthrew the Protestant Ascendancy in its own days of insolent power.

Such was our way of reconciling the Protestant minority, in doctrine and in action. To turn to our critics' plans for aggravating, embittering, and maddening the opposition of the Minority seems like laying down the speech of Grattan on the day of his Declaration of Independence in order to watch the ignoble wars which make horrid the streets of Belfast on Anniversary Days, when the mobs of "The Orange Walk" and "The Green Walk" come into collision and exchange their volleys of paving-stones and battle-cries, and beat their drums in each other's faces until the blood runs from the wrists of the drummers. Young Mr. Winston Churchill's raid on Belfast gives us a typical illustration of the plan of campaign in its boldness and in its unwisdom. It was in February 1912, shortly before the introduction of Mr. Asquith's Home Rule Bill, and at a moment when the most elementary prudence, and even decency, ought to have forbidden a vulgar challenge to Ulster feeling in the Ulster capital on the part of the First Lord of the Admiralty of the Home Rule Cabinet. That moment was chosen for Mr. Devlin's invitation to Mr. Winston



Churchill to attend an Hibernian torchlight procession in his honour in Belfast. The First Lord of the Admiralty, in undertaking the raid, gave a first blazing example of the indiscretions which were afterwards to run his country dangerously near to ruin at Ostend and the Dardanelles and Archangel and Mesopotamia. It is not enough to plead that, in his own estimation, Mr. Churchill's adventure was not that of an Hibernian *gamin*, but of a benign statesman. There has always been a dash of greatness in his impetuosities. But even his boyish self-sufficiency ought not to have blinded him to the preposterous folly of his mission of peace under the auspices of the Board of Erin Hibernians to that very city of Belfast where his father, fresh from his desertion of his alliance with Parnell, had appealed to the worst passions of the Orangemen with his doggerel war-cry: "Ulster will fight and Ulster will be right." He speedily realized into what a hornets' nest he had thrust himself. The Devlin torchlight procession was first given up. Unfortunately, the torches were not quenched until they had set fire to a powder magazine. He fell back upon an indoor meeting in the Ulster Hall. The Ulster Unionist Council retorted by hiring the Ulster Hall for a meeting on the previous night, after which the design was to take and hold armed possession of the Hall as long as Mr. Churchill remained in Belfast, and Sir E. Carson came over as a rival angel of peace to superintend operations.

The Ulster Hall people gladly accepted the hint and cancelled the letting of the Hall for both meetings. The triumphant Orangemen flatly announced that, First Lord of the Admiralty or no, they would allow him no meeting-place within the Forbidden City. There was nothing for it but to take refuge in a marquee erected on the Celtic Football-field on the outskirts of the city and within



the sheltering arms of the Nationalist quarter, the Falls Road. But the First Lord of the Admiralty's cup of humiliation was not even yet full. Although "six special trains laden with troops" arrived the previous day for his protection, and his movements were conducted with the utmost secrecy, the First Lord allowed himself to be chivied from post to pillar by the Orange hooligans, who were waiting for him at Larne, mobbed him the moment he reached Belfast, thronged around him at the modest hotel at which he descended, and ceased not to hoot, and sting, and threaten him, until he escaped in the midst of a phalanx of policemen and cavalry to the faithful Falls Road. There he was safe enough in the arms of a Catholic and Nationalist population as valiant and true-hearted as the world could produce and passed along to the football-ground amidst the fluttering of green flags and the belabouring of effigies inscribed "Carson, the King of the Bluffers." But even there, the luckless Minister was drenched with torrents of rain, which penetrated the clothes of his listeners through the frail covering of the marquee, and when all was over the problem how to get the First Lord safely out of Belfast, without returning to his hotel, where an enormous Orange mob was lying in wait for him, was only solved by an escape along a circuitous route to Larne, where he was finally placed in safety on board the Glasgow boat after a five hours' experience such as rarely falls to the lot of a great Minister of State. To complete the picture, his competitor angel of peace, Sir E. Carson, addressed his triumphant hooligans and complimented them upon "their magnificent self-restraint."

Mr. Winston Churchill's escapade in Belfast—the bounce with which it began, and the tameness with which he accepted the position that a Cabinet Minister protected by "six special trains laden with



troops " must give up the right of free speech the moment the howls and revolvers of the least enlightened section of the Orange populace gave their orders—had two fatal effects on the course of events in Ulster. It gave wanton offence to the most respectable part of the Protestant population, and it filled the most retrograde of the Orangemen and their leaders with contempt for a Government whose poltroonery they took to be even grosser than their folly. Mr. Churchill's challenge and his flight, it is scarcely an exaggeration to say, had more to do with exasperating and crystallising the opposition of Ulster to Home Rule than "the King of the Bluffers" himself, whose incitements up to that time had been addressed to only half-convinced and unarmed men.

While Mr. Devlin's torchlights had thus kindled Ulster into a blaze, on the eve of the introduction of the Home Rule Bill, his organizers were busy in the rest of the country rivalling the unreasonableness of Protestant Orangeism by the terror of a Catholic Orangeism no less odious to the friends of enlightened liberty. As soon as the Home Rule Cabinet was installed in power and their Home Rule Bill announced, the All-for-Ireland League was so determined to prepare for it an untroubled atmosphere that we freely ran the risk of misconstruction by an appeal for co-operation among all Nationalists to secure the largest possible measure of well-considered public sympathy in its support. Even after our overtures were scoffed at with the amiable taunt that Mr. Healy and I "were now of less importance than the rawest recruit in Mr. Redmond's Party," we suspended altogether the propaganda of the All-for-Ireland League, just as it was beginning to spread from county to county and from province to province, knowing as we did that our programme of meetings, no matter how temperately conducted



on our part, could only be carried out in the teeth of an organized Hibernian opposition with bludgeons and revolvers which must disgrace our cause in the eyes of the world and lead to the inevitable destruction of the Bill.<sup>1</sup> If our voices were stifled by

<sup>1</sup> One sample must suffice of the methods by which every attempt to enlighten the country as to our aims was stamped out. On August 27, 1910 (when, be it observed, the Liberal Government then in power had definitively declined to include Home Rule in their legislative programme) I went down to Mayo to address Branches of the All-for-Ireland League, which were spontaneously springing up there in all directions. In my first speech at Ballina I proposed to give the country a sure means of judging for itself where the reproach of "faction" really lay by offering to submit myself to an unimpeachable Jury of Honour to take evidence in the full hearing of the public how the dissensions of the past seven years had arisen. The invitation was, needless to add, steadily ignored, notwithstanding my promise to accept a friend of old standing of Mr. Dillon's (Hon. Bourke Cockran) as President of the Court. The organizers' preparations for breaking up our meeting at Ballina were frustrated by an overwhelming demonstration of welcome on the part of the people. All the emissaries of the Board of Erin were able to compass was that during the speech of Mr. D. D. Sheehan, M.P., a revolver was discharged from a dark corner and a bullet was embedded in the framework of the window from which he was speaking. The next day at Crossmolina, the organizers (they were no less than four) who had been specially despatched to the district from headquarters were more successful. On reaching Crossmolina, Mr. Sheehan and myself were ambushed by an armed mob headed by three priests, whose incitements and physical misconduct it would be too painful to detail. We had to pass through scenes of blackguardism (culminating in a fusillade of revolver shots fired by a Board of Erin ringleader who had just been appointed to an important Government office in the neighbourhood), for a description of which we may trust to an authority so little suspect as the *Freeman's Journal*. Its reporter, in a burst of irrepressible indignation, thus relates what he observed from his own standpoint:

"When Crossmolina was reached, it was seen that stormy times were ahead. A strong force of police were drawn across the Main Street, and behind them was massed a large crowd, who, on the appearance of Mr. O'Brien's party, manifested their hostility in an unmistakeable way, shouting and waving sticks in



organized violence and by still fouler methods in the Press, it cannot be doubted it was because the cabal realized that the Irish people had only to be allowed the opportunity of hearing for themselves the arguments for and against the two programmes which divided the country, and they would have recoiled with horror from the policy of mad sectarianism of which they were being made the unconscious instruments. The Home Rule Bill once produced in the House of Commons, no further public controversy was to be thought of. The people knew nothing further and understood nothing further until the mischief had been done beyond repair. This was how it came to pass that the sinister secret organization which Cardinal Logue had described as, in his own archdiocese, "a pest, a cruel tyranny, and an organized system of blackguardism," spread

a threatening manner. Before reaching this point the horses had been taken from Mr. O'Brien's carriage and a crowd of his supporters drew it along at the head of the procession up to the point where its further progress was impeded by the police cordon . . . . Mr. O'Brien crying out : ' Drive right ahead.' . . . the carriage, drawn at a rapid pace, proceeded to run the blockade, and then a scene occurred which no thoughtful Irishman with any pretensions to patriotism could regard with feelings other than those of regret. Mr. O'Brien was standing in the carriage, and a fierce fusillade of stones, bottles, and eggs, thrown with great force, were directed towards him. He did not flinch, and though the missiles seemed to rain all round him, happily not one of them struck him. . . . The intervals between the speeches were interspersed with band-playing and drum-beating, and a few stones more were thrown at Mr. O'Brien's party and one revolver shot discharged." And the same scenes of violence—revolver-shots, stones, and bottles—were repeated on our departure, one of the chief merchants of Ballina, Mr. Moylett, having his skull fractured as he sat by my side. A few months later, in the same county, under the superintendence of another crop of organizers from Belfast, my wife and myself were fired on at Lecanvey, and the lamp of our motor-car shattered by a bullet, and at Achill a few days afterwards our chauffeur was fired on again and a revolver-bullet lodged in his arm.



its tentacles over every parish in the country—with the blessings and the “doubled subscriptions,” it must with a pang be owned, of some of His Eminence’s brethren in the Hierarchy—reducing the wholesome public influence of the United Irish League to a shadow, feeding its own disciples fat with governmental and local offices and honours, enkindling the honest alarms of Protestant Ulster to a white heat, and making Sir E. Carson’s task an easy one of uniting the most peacefully-minded of the Protestant and Presbyterian farmers and shopkeepers with the fiery Orange fanatics of Belfast in resistance to the new racial and religious exclusiveness.

A blindfolded people, in setting up the “Party Unity” of the Liberalized Hibernian politicians for their god, destroyed the last hope of “National Unity,” which was the thing that really mattered, and destroyed “The Party,” and their nation with it.



## CHAPTER VII

## THE HOME RULE BILL OF 1912

MR. ASQUITH'S Home Rule Bill of 1912 was proclaimed to be "a final settlement," and was so accepted with effusion by the Irish Party. All was staked upon the assurance that it was "a greater measure of Irish freedom than Grattan's or Gladstone's" and that, it were only accepted by Ireland without debate, its passage into law was (in a favourite figure of speech) "as certain as the rising of to-morrow's sun." In the endeavour to ensure this conspiracy of silence in Ireland, it may with truth be said that what purported to be a Bill to establish her legislative independence, was forced upon Ireland *sans phrase* by methods as unconstitutional as had ever been resorted to for the imposition of some hideous Coercion Act. The Irish Party itself (which must henceforth be more truthfully described as the Hibernian Party) abdicated all right to discuss or to interfere, even in its private conclaves. So far as the representatives of Ireland exercised any voice in the fate of their nation, it was done by three leaders in a few furtive interviews in Downing St.—not even (unless rumour lied) with the Prime Minister, but with some subordinate like the excellent Mr. Birrell, who was always perfectly accommodating and always cheerfully ineffectual. Mr. Dillon's plea that the Bill was "the best we could get," was a sufficient attestation how poor a part was played in the construction of the Bill by the Irishmen who held the power of life and death over the great folk in Downing St. Any real discussion in Ireland was laid under a



stern interdict. The Hibernian National Convention, summoned nominally to debate the merits or demerits of the Bill, were, after the manner of the Baton Convention, bidden by an eminent ecclesiastical ring-leader to "keep their amendments in their pockets" and did not, as a matter of fact, suggest the smallest amendment, or perform any other function than that of re-echoing the hi' falutin panegyrics of the Parliamentarians. So a silenced country succeeded a silenced Parliamentary Party. From beginning to end of the debates upon a Bill involving the "final" fate of Ireland in all her most tremendous concerns, her representatives did not suggest a solitary amendment and were not suffered to bear any part in the debates beyond applauding the two or three "safe" leaders who were at very rare intervals put up to speak for them, or savagely resenting any criticism of the Irish finance of Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Herber Samuel. They were more like slaves kneeling to kiss hands on their manumission than freemen standing up for the rights of their nation. A Bill which all men now know to be as full of faults as a sieve is of holes passed through Committee without the alteration of a line at the instance of the country it most vitally concerned. So complete was the machinery by which the Irish people were prevented from discussing or even understanding the provisions of the Bill or the ignominious misconduct of their representatives during its passage through Parliament that, when, after four tongue-tied years of humiliation for the country, the Bill was nominally transferred to the Statute Book, an innocent Irish public actually allowed bonfires to be lighted in their name in celebration of the event, without the smallest suspicion that what they were really celebrating was the consent of the representatives of Ireland to the Partition of the country thus mocked with a forged title-deed to freedom. And the Hibernian and Liberal parties to



the deceit professed to be surprised beyond measure when the young generation who were all this time meditating in silence these intolerable affronts to the honour and even to the intelligence of their nation, sprang to arms in the Easter Week of 1916, and gave Parliamentaryism its quietus!

It seems scarcely necessary to insist. It was Mr. Redmond's fate, however, to be obliged to go on vociferating that his goose was a swan of the finest down. Even after three years for reflection, in a public letter to the Dublin Corporation (July 20th, 1915), he committed himself to the preposterous boast that :—

“The Home Rule Act of last year is a better Act than the Bill of 1886, which Mr. Parnell accepted as a settlement and is a far better and freer constitution than Grattan and the Volunteers won in 1782.”

It was a claim that could only have been made to a public kept in blank ignorance of the provisions of the measure. To the most infatuated of his dupes it would at this time of day sound like a cruel sarcasm. One test—that of Finance—will suffice to expose the absurdity of his representation of a Devolution Bill which in all other respects was on the same level of national dignity as the Parliament of Saskatchewan. Grattan's Parliament had the uncontested power of the purse. England could not levy a shilling in taxation or take a man for her army or navy except with its consent. Under Asquith Home Rule, the power of taxation would have remained absolutely and without limit at Westminster. The unfortunate Dublin Parliament had no appeal from any levies of the British Chancellor of the Exchequer, except to a Joint Exchequer Board of which the British Chancellor would command a majority of the votes. Ireland might, indeed, add to the tremendous burdens laid upon her by the British Budget certain fantastic taxes of her own, but the power was so silly a play-



thing that Mr. Herbert Samuel could suggest no other local tax open to the Irish Parliament except a tax upon bicycles or advertisements.

As for the Bill of 1886 (which it was false to suggest Parnell "accepted as a settlement") it was at least a Bill which to begin with separated the Parliament of Ireland altogether from that of Westminster, while the Asquith Act not only retained the connection and the subjection of Ireland in its most humiliating form, but reduced her representation from 103 to 42 in the Parliament where the power of the purse lay. Nor was that all. Parnell had obtained an amendment of the Bill of 1886 limiting for thirty years Ireland's Imperial contribution to £3,132,000, while if the Asquith Act had been in full force the Imperial Parliament would have been as free as it has been without it to raise Ireland's Imperial contribution to the colossal figure of £25,000,000 per annum. Had the Bill of 1886 prevailed, the Imperial Chancellor would have no power to augment Ireland's contribution by a pound during the first three years of the World War, and could only have attempted it even then by calling back Ireland's 103 representatives to Westminster to have their say, while under the slippery finance of Mr. Samuel, England was left free to exact Imperial contributions from Ireland £20,000,000 a year greater than the maximum stipulated for by Parnell. Such was the measure which Mr. Redmond did not hesitate to describe as "the greatest charter of liberty ever offered to Ireland," and for its financial flaws Mr. Devlin, who had perhaps neglected to read the text of the Bill at all split the ears of the groundlings with the cry: "Freedom first, and finance afterwards!" Without adverting to the possibility which everybody now knows to be the truth that the caricature of "Freedom" might be as sorry an imposture as the finances were dishonest.



Were my colleagues and myself wise or unwise in making the best of the Asquith Bill instead of slaying it if it remained unamended? God knoweth! The drastic course would have been the tempting as well as the easy one. It is scarcely too much to say that the unmatched Parliamentary resources of Mr. Tim Healy alone would have sufficed to bring the Bill to certain shipwreck. We had no responsibility for the character of the Bill. One evening at the rising of the House in November, 1911, while there was still ample time for deliberation, I called attention to a forecast of the Bill in the Ministerial organ, the *Daily News*, in substance foreshadowing the Bill of the next Session in its worst weaknesses, and I appealed to the Government, if the forecast were well founded, to take Ireland into his confidence in good time and give her people some opportunity for friendly remonstrance. My observations were half-drowned by the chorus of offensive interruptions in which the least reputable of the Hibernians were now habitually joined by a knot of newly elected Radicals and Labour men below the Ministerial gangway on the rare occasions when my colleagues and myself sought a hearing, but they were received in a different spirit by the Prime Minister, who assured me nothing had yet been decided upon and made an earnest appeal for the communication to the Ministry of any suggestions of my own. Mr. Healy lost no time in marking the contrast between the grave courtesy of the Prime Minister and the ill-manners of his followers. The invitation was one not to be shirked. In consultation with my colleagues, I drew up a Memorandum, in which we made no disguise of our own conviction that Dominion Home Rule, with unfettered Fiscal Autonomy, would be the safest, as well as boldest, remedy for the quarrel between the two countries, but should this be dismissed, as for the moment impracticable in its fulness, we did not rule out some farseeing experiment in Federa-



tion which would in practice gradually conquer the objections to the larger extension of independence. The Memorandum at the same time laid down as essentials two requirements which excited the bitter hostility of the Hibernian Party at the time, but the absence of which from the Bill when it was produced it is evident enough to all men now was the secret of the calamitous breakdown of Asquithian Home Rule—viz., generous concessions such as would have disarmed all rational opposition in Ulster to a National Parliament, and the removal of the last great social stumbling block in the way of an Irish Parliament by the completion of Land Purchase as an Imperial transaction. The following was the reply of the Prime Minister :—

“ Confidential.

10, Downing St., Whitehall S.W.,  
7th Nov., 1911.

DEAR MR. O'BRIEN,

I am greatly obliged by your letter of the 4th and my colleagues and I will give most careful attention to its contents.

Yours very faithfully,  
H. H. ASQUITH.”

“ W. O'Brien, Esq., M.P.”

This was the only communication vouchsafed to the representatives of at least 500,000 hereditary Nationalists who had been foremost in the fight when fight was the word of order—whose temper of conciliation when conciliation was the truest patriotism English statesmanship would now give freely of its treasures to restore—representatives, moreover, who, it has since been made plain, spoke the secret thoughts of the Irish Unionists of the South and in a surprising degree of the North as well. The explanation is, of course, simple enough. The Memorandum after receiving “ the most careful attention ” of Mr. Asquith and his colleagues had to be passed along to their



Hibernian advisers and was never heard of more. When I had to make up my mind what to say on the First Reading of the Bill, it was under the cruel disadvantage of never having received the smallest hint, oral or written, of what its contents were to be until I heard them disclosed by the lips of the Prime Minister.

Nevertheless, disappointing as was the revelation when it came, I took up without hesitation on that night the attitude of cordial friendliness and helpfulness towards the Bill which my friends and myself never relaxed until, two years afterwards, the Bill was turned into a hideous compact for the Partition of the country. It was impossible to hear the Prime Minister without realizing and saying—"Let there be no mistake about it—the Home Rule of this Bill is not Grattan's Parliament, it is not Repeal of the Union, it is not Colonial Home Rule any more than it is an Irish Republic"—without deploring that the Cabinet had rejected the recommendation of their own Committee of Experts that "the Irish Parliament should be equipped with fiscal independence fully and at once in the raising of their own revenue"—without asking "fair-minded opponents of this Bill to remember that however much we are ready to renounce in our eagerness for a genuine and enduring peace with the people of England and with those who were once called the English Garrison in Ireland, it is a solemn thing for the representatives of an ancient cause to make up their minds to sacrifice so much that entered into the dreams that came as naturally to some of us as the blood in our veins in order to purchase peace between the two countries"; but first and last, I made it clear that: "whatever the ultimate fate of this Bill may be, I cannot conceive of any Nationalist of any type or school who will not approach its consideration with the deepest respect and with an anxious desire to put the most favourable construction upon



it," declaring finally my own deep conviction that "the success of an Irish Parliament must depend to a large degree upon its being won by the consent rather than by the compulsion of the Protestant minority and I for one would be prepared to go to any reasonable length, or even to some unreasonable lengths, to secure that co-operation and good-will."

To the attitude thus promptly taken up and never departed from, the reply was the chorus of "factionist" and "traitor" from that moment shouted incessantly into the ears of a people who were denied every chance of reading my words: with how much justice may be inferred from the judgment of two men from opposite standpoints. John Burns, then in the summer of his democratic power, came over to say to me: "That is a speech that does credit to your head and to your heart." The observations of William Moore, afterwards a Justice of the High Court, and then the most characteristic leader of the Orange Party in Ulster were these:

"I believe myself that the hon. member for Cork is perfectly right in the policy he has again and again announced to Ireland; that it is no use talking about Home Rule for all Ireland unless you get the Protestants of Ireland to consent to it. That is absolutely true. If our consent were won, as I said the other day, there would be very little difficulty about the matter. But since the hon. gentleman, the member for Cork, has thrown out a Policy of Conciliation, which means the right hand of fellowship for Protestants, the mere fact of his doing so has brought upon him attacks from the Ancient Order of Hibernians and others."

My first impression without an hour for deliberation proved to be the sound one, as soon as the Bill was in print. The National Conference of the All-for-Ireland League met in Cork on May 25th, 1912, to determine our action on the Second Reading. Nobody



who analyses the seven and a half closely printed pages of names will dispute that the assembly contained an overwhelming number of the representative men of the South, with not a few of the men of power from the most distant parts of the country as well.<sup>1</sup> Had such an assembly pronounced against the Bill, or even given an ambiguous verdict, nothing could have saved the Government measure in a country already raging against its insignificance as a national settlement. There was neither a wavering note nor one of false lyricism. The first Clause of the Bill ran: "On and after the appointed day there shall be in Ireland an Irish Parliament consisting of His Majesty the King and two Houses, namely, the Irish Senate and the Irish House of Commons." It was the solemn compact for a United Ireland, ruled by an Irish Parliament, one and indivisible—a compact destined to be afterwards shamefully repudiated and annulled. It was the only Clause savouring of National Independence in the 48 Clauses, but it was enough for those of us who could have forgiven even the Irish Council Bill everything for its being based on an undivided Ireland, and the present compromise, beggarly though it was, was nevertheless like the other "consistent with and leading up to the larger

<sup>1</sup> With the exception of one potent element. By a technical ecclesiastical ordinance the clergy were forbidden to be present. Mr. Healy, a Catholic in every fibre of body and soul, made a thrilling allusion to an incident as the Conference were assembling when a famous parish priest from Tipperary—Father Matt Ryan—"who had been with us in all the stirring times of sacrifice in the past, and now, when we are on the verge of victory, found himself turned back and forbidden to partake of our triumph"—adding with prophetic vision: "I do think that hereafter it will not be forgotten, should division arise between laity and clergy, that it was on the important occasion of an Irish Parliament Bill that Irish priests were refused the liberty of rallying round us." Father Matt Ryan was, a few years later, one of the foremost figures in the Sinn Féin reaction which overthrew a Parliamentaryism rendered hateful by such methods.



policy." The National Conference not only refused to follow the Hibernian precedent in the case of the Irish Council Bill of first blessing and then rejecting the Bill with a war-whoop, but promised it a whole-hearted support subject to three amendments which our critics have since spent bitter years in endeavouring to resuscitate when too late :—viz., a reconstruction of what Mr. Healy compendiously described as the "putrid" finances of the Bill; the completion of the Abolition of Landlordism by Imperial credit; and such concessions to the apprehensions (however imaginary) of "Ulster" as would have delivered the country from any peril of Partition.

One other particularity has to be noted. The pretext for the malignity with which Lord Dunraven and the Irish Unionists who followed him were pursued was that they were really engaged in a conspiracy to make Home Rule impossible. To calumnies like this the pronouncements of the Unionists at the National Conference gave a noble answer. They were all for amending, none for wrecking, and amending in the direction of uniting and enlarging the powers of the Irish Nation. Lord Dunraven, in a letter to myself, touched with a sure hand what might have been and what still easily might be :—

"I pray you to use your best endeavours to secure for our Parliament fairplay and a fair chance and I pray you never cease from striving to make us a nation. Had your National and patriotic policy been carried on during these wasted years since the Land Conference, this outburst of irreconcilable opinion in the North could never have taken place. Differences of opinion there always will be and ought to be, but they ought to be subordinated to a sense of unity—a sense of Nationality, a determination to work together in friendship for our country's good."

Mr. Moreton Frewen, whose brain and winning



personality wanted nothing but a dose of the politician's guile to give him a high place among the world's statesmen—who had parted with his estate to his tenants at a most equitable price—who had surrendered his Irish seat in Parliament rather than support a Parliament Bill which, in his eyes, in antagonising a mutilated House of Lords would destroy an unequalled means of reassuring and conciliating Ulster, and was more vilely abused for his chivalry in still indomitably sticking to the All-for-Ireland Cause than he would have been if he had justified his ungenerous assailants by betraying it—Mr. Moreton Frewen made a speech in which he foreshadowed the disaster of Partition as clearsightedly as all the world is discussing it to-day :

“ Do let us be careful—I know Mr. O'Brien is as careful as possible—about the susceptibilities of Ulster. We do not want Ireland to be partitioned. We have lost the opportunity of generations. Two years ago the Home Rule atmosphere was clear. We should have gone forward two years ago and got a settlement. The Land Purchase scheme which we owe to Mr. O'Brien and Lord Dunraven was going on magically—so admirably that all the difficulties in this country and in England were enormously relieved. Lord Grey at Ottawa told me we were within arms' length of the settlement of the Irish question by consent. Lord Milner had come into our camp full of anxiety and determination to settle the Home Rule question on Federal lines. Lord Minto and Lord Dudley were of the same mind. Had these four men gone North to the chiefs of Ulster and asked for a conciliatory and friendly settlement of the question, I believe we should have got the whole difficulty well in hand before this time. It is not too late for this yet. These things are still all ahead of us. But if you are going to allow the situation to be controlled by Mr. John Redmond or rather by Dillon and by



Devlin, I am quite convinced the danger which sticks out of our present troubles is probably the partition of Ireland. . . . I sympathise with Mr. O'Brien in the stand he is making, and am anxious not to say one word that by any possibility would make his task more difficult than it is. There is nothing any man can do that in my humble way I will not do to assist the cause of the All-for-Ireland League."

And to the last hour, while even the smallest strength was left in the arm of the All-for-Ireland League, Mr. Moreton Frewen was true to his word. Every succeeding Unionist speaker—Sir John Keane of Cappoquin, Mr. Villiers Stuart of Dromana, Dr. Thompson of Omagh—showed the same delicate sense of the difficulties, the same eager determination to turn the Bill with all its flaws to the best account as the most fervid of the veteran Nationalists who thronged the platform and whose sons while these pages are being written (1921) are on the hills as soldiers of the Irish Republican Army. The Conference offered one more opportunity for that co-operation of all Irish Parties by which the Bill in Committee might still have been built up into a great measure of national appeasement. It was not on my part, either then or at any critical moment before or after, the first tender of a fraternal hand was missing :

"Every speech that Mr. Redmond now makes in the House of Commons is a glowing tribute to our principles and a crushing condemnation of those of Mr. Dillon and Mr. Devlin. . . . But it is never too late to bury the hatchet. We are quite willing to forgive and forget all past differences, if even now it be made possible for us. We are perfectly willing to suspend all controversy amongst Irish Nationalists until the fate of this Bill is decided one way or the other. If the majority of the representatives of Ireland will even now unite with us in inducing the Government—in forcing the Government as beyond



all doubt they have the power to do—in forcing the Government to give the Irish people satisfaction in these three particulars (freedom of taxation, completion of Land Purchase and friendly negotiation to secure the good-will of our Protestant countrymen), I am in my heart convinced that even on the lines of this present Bill and much as we may have to renounce, Ireland may still win a future of solid happiness, prosperity and peace. We for our part will do all that men can do to carry it, and we shall gladly leave it to our countrymen hereafter to say whether it was an unpardonable crime on our part to insist that the national settlement should be won upon conditions that will banish for ever from the face of Ireland the horrors and animosities of agrarian war and that will incorporate once and for all in the blood and bone of our Irish nation a million of the hardy Protestant breed of the Grattans, and the Emmets and the Parnells.”

Here was a bid for that joint action in Committee which must in the nature of things have resulted in vast modifications of the Bill, and all of them in directions now recognised to have been vital ameliorations in the interest of Irish freedom. It was the occasion of all others for giving effect to the condition to which the Irish Party had pledged itself in the reunion of 1908 of “cordially welcoming the co-operation of Irishmen of all classes and creeds willing to aid in the attainment of the complete abolition of Landlordism” (among other objects). As a matter of fact, no Irish newspaper except the *Cork Free Press* gave a serious report of the proceedings of the National Conference—its composition, or its arguments or its proposals. They were never heard of at all in England, where the newspapers derived their Irish information from correspondents in the offices of the Hibernian organs. The Hibernian leaders contemptuously spurned the last chance of establishing an under-



standing with Ulster or of obtaining the alleviation or even consideration of the Finance Clauses, and went on their way towards Partition with an uproarious optimism that never deserted them until they toppled over into the abyss and dragged "Constitutional" Home Rule with them.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The following reply of the *Freeman's Journal* to my offer of co-operation throws a flood of light upon the spirit then rampant in the Hibernian camp :

"It is to be feared that 'All Ireland' will not take very seriously the proceedings at Cork. Mr. William O'Brien and Mr. Timothy Healy were once persons of importance in Irish politics. Now it is not too much to assert that their views upon any serious Irish question are of less importance than those of the rawest recruit to the Irish ranks. It really does not matter what they say about the Home Rule Bill. Mr. O'Brien knew that he dare not lay a little finger upon the Bill to prevent its passage, and that if he did he and his 'party' would disappear from Parliament at the next election. . . . There were only two speeches of interest at Cork ; they were delivered by Mr. O'Brien's converts, Sir John Keane and Mr. Moreton Frewen. From the reports to hand, it is not possible to gather exactly the views of the brace about the Home Rule Bill ; but there is no mistake as to what the converts want. 'Give us Land Purchase and the devil take Home Rule' would be no unfair representation of their view."



## CHAPTER VIII

MISMANAGEMENT AND DECEIT  
(1912)

WE have seen that the first year of "the Home Rule Parliament" was sold away to Mr. Lloyd George for his Insurance Act. The most precious part of the second year was still more curiously wasted. After the formality of the Second Reading of the Home Rule Bill and the first Clause of a Bill consisting of 48 Clauses and four Schedules disposed of, the substantial work in Committee was postponed over the summer months and was only approached in the languor of an Autumn Session. There was no over-pressure of other work to excuse this second encroachment upon the time of what was to be known as "The Home Rule Session." Two days of every week during the wasted months were given up to the academic Motions and Bills of private Members, which are unceremoniously bundled out of the way by any Government intent on real business. When the business of Committee was really tackled it was prefaced by a Closure-by-Compartment Motion, the object of which too plainly was to guillotine any attempt to amend the Bill from the Nationalist standpoint, and which had the no less mischievous result in Britain of creating a suspicion that a constitutional revolution of so much consequence was to be hustled through without giving England time to discuss, or even understand it. The dilapidation of the second year of "the Home Rule Parliament," like the surrender of the first, could not, of course, have occurred without the complicity of the Hibernian



Party. The Bill must go through without amendment or discussion in the shape fixed by that super-Parliament at the Downing St. breakfast table. My friends and myself (we never formed ourselves into a Party nor elected a leader) were so determined to put any imputation of wasting time out of the question that we only proposed to persevere with two amendments, of which no man will now be found to dispute the necessity. The closure-by-compartment time-table, as will be seen presently, managed to strangle even the few hours' discussion that would have sufficed for these two amendments, and did so by tricks which reflected discredit, and indeed dishonour upon the Ministers who had recourse to them. We made our protest against methods which we feared "might be peculiarly dangerous to the ultimate fate of the Bill," and which would have been quite unnecessary had not progress in Committee during the most valuable months of the Session been unaccountably blocked. Nevertheless, we added: "If the Government and their Irish advisers, who are responsible for the management of business, tell us that there is nothing else for it, if the Bill is to have any chance of going through this Session, we acquiesce." Let us now see how our appeal to the Prime Minister, "whom I had always found to be a man to his word," for "a fair and square discussion" of the two amendments that remained was answered.

1. A Bill of 48 Clauses contained only a single line referring to the tremendous subject of completing the abolition of Landlordism, and this so peculiarly worded as seemingly to rule any discussion of the subject out of order. The result would have been to confront the infant Irish Parliament with more than one hundred thousand farmers whom the Act of 1909 had disabled from purchasing, and either to transfer to Ireland the Imperial task of financing the operation, or to replunge the country into stark anarchy. This,



indeed, it was too obvious, was the very design of the equivocal line of reference to Land Purchase, for Mr. Dillon in his crazy quarrel with the landlords and the Land Conference settlement, thought he was serving the cause of Home Rule by publicly bragging at this juncture that the Bill would leave the landlords at the mercy of the Irish Parliament, and that the Imperial Parliament would no longer be there to protect them. Parnell had foreseen the difficulty of leaving an Irish Parliament loaded with so intolerable a responsibility. One of the two stipulations as to the future of Home Rule upon which he insisted during our Boulogne negotiations of 1891, and which were formally accepted by Gladstone and Morley, was that any Home Rule Bill must provide for the whole land settlement being undertaken by the Imperial Parliament simultaneously or all but simultaneously under a penalty which no Imperial Parliament was likely to incur of leaving "the English Garrison" to their fate as the passions or the financial necessities of an Irish legislature might decide it. Our Land Purchase Amendment was simply a paraphrase of the words and figures of the compact between Gladstone and Parnell:

"It would be obviously inconsistent with the concession of Home Rule to Ireland that the power to deal with the laws relating to land in Ireland should be permanently confined to the Imperial Parliament. It will have to be exercised simultaneously with the establishment of Home Rule or within a limited period thereafter to be specified in the Home Rule Bill or the power to deal with it must be committed to the local legislature."

When I questioned the Prime Minister whether he would give effect to the undertaking of Gladstone by accepting our amendment, he first denied any knowledge of such an undertaking. Pressed to make inquiries, he made a shambling acknowledgment that the undertaking had been given as the condition for



Parnell's retirement from the leadership, but Parnell not having retired the Boulogne compact fell to the ground and nothing further came of it. This amazingly deceitful reply must have been supplied by Mr. Morley, who was himself the medium for Gladstone's acceptance of the Boulogne stipulations. In assuring the House of Commons that Gladstone's undertaking on the land went no further, he was the victim of a lapse of memory so egregious as to lay himself open to the suspicion of misleading the House of Commons in a vital matter of good faith between the two countries. Mr. Healy's memory—an encyclopædia of the Parliamentary affairs of the previous quarter of a century—enabled me to meet the Prime Minister with a staggering exposure of the untruth. Not only was it untrue to represent that nothing further was heard of the Boulogne stipulation, but I was able to read out for him the clause of the Home Rule Bill of 1893—framed by the Government of which Mr. Asquith and Mr. Morley were members—by which Gladstone honourably acquitted himself of his promise to Parnell in almost the very words of the Boulogne Compact. Clause 35 read as follows :

“ 35—During three years from the passing of this Act, and if Parliament is then sitting until the end of that Session of Parliament, the Irish Legislature shall not pass an Act respecting the relations of landlord and tenant, or the sale, purchase, or letting of land generally.”

The Prime Minister admitted the House of Commons had been led astray as to a capital fact in the history of the Gladstone Cabinet, of which he was himself a member, but he took no steps to make amends by honestly incorporating in his own Bill the



Clause which Gladstone had conceived himself bound in honour to insert in the Bill of 1893. Once more no doubt it was his Hibernian advisers who carried the day. Mr. Redmond who first came into prominence as Parnell's chief supporter in the Split of 1890 and who, with Parnell and myself, had negotiated the Boulogne compact with Gladstone and Mr. Morley, opened not his lips to compel this act of justice to be done to his dead chief. The leader felt himself compelled as usual to follow his followers, and they celebrated as if it were in some curious way a triumph for Ireland our failure to get the Prime Minister to reincorporate in his Home Rule Bill the clause which Gladstone had felt bound to add to the Bill of 1893, to Parnell's honour and to his own. In a measure purporting to take thought for Ireland's future peace and concord the unsettled portion of the Land Problem was deliberately left unsettled as a standing provocation to chaos and bad blood.

The way in which our amendment was shelved by a new and equally delusive promise was characteristic. By a coincidence which was now becoming chronic, the Prime Minister was indisposed when the debate came on, but he commissioned Mr. Birrell to give a pledge "given with such solemnity on a subject of so much seriousness, given on the word of a British Minister across the floor of the House," that Mr. Healy generously accepted it as "a pledge as good for us as if it were the law of the land." Mr. Birrell promised with almost passionate eagerness on behalf of the Prime Minister that, if our amendment were withdrawn, "this Government absolutely recognises its full and complete responsibility quite apart from the fate or fortunes of the Bill now in Committee," and that "we are absolutely committed to the completion of Land Purchase at the earliest possible day." He even protested that he himself, whose Act of 1909 had repealed the great measure of 1903, was so



fanatically devoted to Land Purchase that in his judgment "the completion of Land Purchase is more important than Home Rule itself." Nothing could be sweeter nor more deceptive. Parnell's design for forcing the Imperial Parliament to action was to compel them by a clause in the Statute to hand over the whole subject to the Irish Parliament if the Imperial Parliament should prove dilatory. That security was now gone. The subject was to be wholly reserved to the Imperial Parliament with, indeed, the Government's all too vehement pledge to settle it "at the earliest possible moment whatever the fate of the Home Rule Bill." The promise thus solemnly sworn in order to evade our amendment, was, like all the rest, shamelessly broken. Mr. Asquith during the years of his Premiership at the head of the Home Rule Government and of the First Coalition never budged an inch to complete Land Purchase. Mr. Lloyd George's Second Coalition Government later undertook to pass simultaneously with their latest "Home Rule" performance (the disastrous Partition Act of 1920) an Act for the completion of Land Purchase on Imperial credit. As these pages are written, nine years after the rejection of our amendment, Irish deputations are ghosting the British Ministers and the Treasury with vain lamentations that their promises to Ireland have been once more cynically broken, and the promised Land Purchase Bill stands adjourned to the Greek Kalends.<sup>1</sup> But an amendment, which might have aided powerfully in disarming the opposition of Ulster to Home

<sup>1</sup> LATER NOTE (1922).—Now that the Irish Provisional Government is in operation one of its most cruel difficulties is the outcry of "the unpurchased tenants" (left "unpurchased" wholly through the unwisdom of Mr. Dillon) for the completion of Land Purchase by an Irish State without the necessary credit to finance it, and as a consequence the reopening of the agrarian difficulty in a more ruinous form than ever.



Rule, as well as healed the last running sore of social disturbance in the country, was successfully got out of the way, and in the words of old Gaspar, on the field of Blenheim: "It was a famous victory!"

2. Our interference on the question of Finance was limited to a single appeal for the modification of a scheme for which no responsible man will now offer a word of defence. Our case was one to which nothing short of sheer Parliamentary bullying could have denied a fair hearing. I pointed out to Mr. Lloyd George, who was then Chancellor of the Exchequer, that the freedom proffered to Ireland point-blank refused her freedom of taxation—the first postulate of all true liberty. Ireland would be left at the mercy of an Imperial taxmaster in the Westminster Parliament—a Parliament too in which Ireland's representation was to be cut down by two-thirds. The derisory powers of taxation nominally given to the Dublin Parliament could only be exercised after the Imperial Chancellor had first exacted his last pound of flesh. The refusal of fiscal independence was the more flagrant a wrong that its concession was recommended by the Primrose Committee of experts called in by the Cabinet themselves to advise them—a Committee of whose seven members only one was an Irishman. There was little difficulty in showing that the Budget actually worked out under the Bill as it stood was a mass of contradictions and injustices. It was founded upon the repudiation of Ireland's historic claim—endorsed by the Childers' Royal Commission of 1896 and by the Cabinet's own financial advisers, the Primrose Committee, that Ireland had been wronged by the English Treasury every year since the Union in over-taxation estimated by so competent an authority as Lord MacDonnell to amount to £315,000,000 in all. For this balance-sheet between the two countries was now substituted without a word of protest except our own from the representa-



tives of Ireland the new and impudent claim on which Mr. Herbert Samuel based the finances of the Bill, namely that, contrary to all the Childers' Commission and the Primrose Committee had placed on record, Ireland had really been shirking her fair share of Imperial taxation and was at this moment indebted to the English Treasury to the tune of £2,300,000 a year for the luxury of being governed by her bountiful masters.

The fraud of the Samuel profit and loss account was an audacious one. He strove to give plausibility to his invention of an Irish "Deficit" by two tricks more worthy of the book-keeping of a fraudulent company than of the financial honour of a great Empire. The first was to repudiate Gladstone's recognition in his Bill of 1886 of her "collected" revenue as an asset to the credit of Ireland and to substitute for it a "true" revenue as depleted and doctored by the Treasury, thus at a stroke appropriating to the Treasury £2,000,000 a year which Gladstone made open confession to be Ireland's property. His second device was to charge against Ireland as though for her own private joy and luxury huge sums of Imperial expenditure—e.g., £1,300,000 for the Royal Irish Constabulary which were incurred wholly for Imperial purposes as the means of maintaining an alien military rule. I reminded the Chancellor that the Gladstone Bill of 1886 made a contribution of £500,000 a year to the Constabulary charges, as a force in its essence as Imperial as the army and navy and that Sir E. Hamilton, the Under Secretary, told the Childers' Commission that two-thirds of the Constabulary vote was properly Imperial. But to eke out the Samuel-made "Deficit," a fraud was to follow of such a character that it almost passes belief how the financial conscience of a great nation could ever have stained itself by practising it upon Ireland in a measure purporting to endow her with



her freedom. The great Purchase Act of 1903—the first shining success of England in all her dealings with Ireland for seven centuries—could only have been passed by providing an “Aid Fund” or Bonus as an Imperial Free Gift to cover the difference between the price the tenant could afford to pay and that which the landlord could afford to accept. That the Bonus should be a free Imperial gift for the highest of Imperial achievements was the only condition on which any party in Ireland could have consented to pass the Act. Mr. Samuel impudently proposed (and again without protest from the Hibernian benches) to repudiate this Bonus of £16,000,000 to £20,000,000 as an Imperial debt and to transfer it to the shoulders of Ireland, together with the whole expense of the Irish Land Commission then amounting to £616,000 a year, in order to bring out the required “Deficit” in his honest balance-sheet between the two nations. Finally, while the Gladstone Bill of 1886 fixed Ireland’s nett Imperial contribution from her “collected” revenue at £1,132,000 for thirty years, the Treasury under the Asquith Bill, was to retain £5,000,000 of the cooked “true” revenue of Ireland of £11,000,000 for the “Home Rule” year, with the certainty of an unlimited increase, as the British Chancellor of the Exchequer dictated. (Since the world-war Ireland’s Imperial contribution has actually mounted to £18,000,000 per annum).

Here was a case, however imperfectly expounded, which was at least worth weighing well. My single speech on the subject as the spokesman of half a million of Nationalists, was not, it might be supposed, an unpardonable offence. Not so in the opinion of Mr. Lloyd George and his Hibernian advisers. He leaped into the fray not to reason with his adversary but to butcher him, with a tomahawk for his weapon, and in the temper of the tomahawk’s original patentees.



For him it was the getting of a scalp, and not the future of a nation that was at stake. He made no pretence of understanding, much less of answering the arguments for Ireland's claim, but with the delicate taste which makes the joy of a country Petty Sessions Court, set himself to ridicule my qualifications as a financial expert, which truly were no deeper than his own ; but he overlooked the circumstance that the facts and figures he was deriding were those of a British Royal Commission and of the Committee of Experts called in by his own Cabinet. Any personal wound to myself was healed easily enough by the spectacle of a British Minister on a great occasion floundering along from one tipsy blunder to another as to which any Irish schoolboy of intelligence might have set him right. It was not so easy to pardon the indecency of Ireland's own representatives. They went wild with exultation while Mr. Lloyd George slashed and danced and whooped as he tore to shreds the financial claims which every great Irishman for generations had declared to be the first elements of justice to their country. Not even one's deep contempt could lessen the pain of listening to the resounding Hibernian chorus, which greeted the defence of every fraudulent device of the Financial Clauses by the man whom they had egged on in the days of his "great and good Budget," and of his Home Rule-blocking Insurance Bill, and between whose knees they were yet to yield their consent to the Partition of Ireland.

One hope remained, if not of modifying in the smallest degree the finances of the Bill, at least of laying them open to reconsideration. Our amendment proposed that at least the financial relations between the two countries should be revised after an experimental period of five years. But once more the Home Rule Cabinet was adamant, and their Hibernian followers turned down their thumbs. The



amendment must not even be discussed. The expedient by which this noble result was achieved was a singularly dirty, as well as dishonest, one. According to the Government time table, Clause 14 on which alone any alteration in the general financial scheme would be in order was put down at the end of the sitting after the debates on a Report stage of other matters which was certain to occupy the time up to 10.30 o'clock, when the guillotine fell ; so of course it happened automatically and Clause 14 was added to the Bill without a word of debate. The design was all the more impudently revealed by the time-table arrangement that the two next days were given up to other Financial Clauses (15 and 16) which immediately followed, but on which the discussion of our amendment would have been ruled out of order. The discussion, even for a minute, of the future finances of Ireland was effectually stamped out. Once again the Hibernian Party saw it was good and roared with joy over our discomfiture. And so perfect was the apparatus for smothering public opinion, no whisper of the above transaction was suffered to reach, or could ever till now reach ninety nine out of a hundred men in Ireland, or even the remaining one per centum in Britain.



## CHAPTER IX

NEITHER FORESIGHT NOR BACKBONE  
(1912-'13-'14)

"ULSTER" proved the rock on which Liberal Home Rule went to pieces. The first cause of the shipwreck was that the Liberal "Home Rule Government"—doubtless by the ill-advice of the Hibernians—began by ignoring the existence of "Ulster"; the next was that they met the first preparations of "Ulster," not with the concessions which everybody (and nobody more generously than the Irish Republicans) now recognize to be the obvious wisdom of the case, but with inconceivably silly taunts and jeers; and the worst of all was that when they came to realize that Ulster had got arms in her hands, their ridicule was given up in a panic, and Sir E. Carson's right to arm for rebellion against the law of the Imperial Parliament was abjectly conceded by the nerveless custodians of "Law and Order." The ignoble Odyssey began with sorry jokes and ended with Partition.

Mr. Redmond's hard necessity for following the Hibernian lead at any price, on the plea that his compliance meant Unity, cannot altogether be accepted as an excuse for the astounding indiscretion of the boast with which he commenced his campaign for the Home Rule Bill: "There is no longer an Ulster Difficulty." He might well have been warned by the fate of a similar oracle of his in 1898, when he balmily proclaimed: "There is no longer an Irish Land Question," on the eve of the long and bitter struggle which forced a Unionist Coercion Govern-



ment to abolish landlordism root and branch. His inacquaintance with the deeper realities of Irish feeling and opinion was one of the principal sources of his weakness as an Irish leader. It is quite certain that, if he could give rein to his own secret convictions, nobody understood better than he the permanent value to the Irish Nation of conciliating the Protestant minority, or would be less likely to give practical effect to the threat of putting down the opposition of Ulster "with the strong hand" into which he was betrayed in another incautious moment.

It is to be remarked that during the first twelve months' debates on the Home Rule Bill, nobody—not even the most fanatical of the Ulster Party—had any thought of Partition in its subsequent sense. The first Clause "On and after the appointed day there shall be in Ireland an Irish Parliament consisting of His Majesty the King and two houses, namely, the Irish Senate and the Irish House of Commons"—affirmed once for all the integrity of Ireland, and was the only Clause on which Partition could have been suggested in Committee. Neither Sir E. Carson nor any member of the Ulster Party put down any amendment with that object. The sole amendment on the subject debated was raised by one of the only two anti-Home Rulers in the Liberal Party, Mr. Agar-Robartes, and it only proposed "the exclusion from the provisions of this Act of the four counties of Antrim, Armagh, Down and Londonderry." Sir E. Carson's own speech made no disguise of the fact that he only supported the Amendment as a means of wrecking the Bill. The separation of Ulster, he declared, in his opening sentence, was one as to which "I may say at the outset that, so far as I know, there is no difference at all as between the Irish members." Ulster had never asked for a separate Parliament and would never consent "to anything that would be in the nature of desertion of any of the Southern pro-



vinces." He frankly owned the only attraction of the amendment for him was that "if Ulster succeeds, Home Rule is dead."

One passage of the Ulster leader's speech is of lasting interest as disclosing the anything but irreconcilable temper, even then, of the Protestant minority, and the temper on the Hibernian side which convinced them that any genuine overtures of conciliation from the Nationalists were not to be looked for :

"I know that the Prime Minister believes that when this Bill is passed and when the controversy is out of the way that Ulster will get a fair share of the Government of Ireland. . . . Where have we, even in the last twenty years since this Home Rule question has been before the country, any single instance in the whole conduct of the majority in Ireland of encouragement to believe that we can expect fair play at their hands? Not one in twenty years. There has been an attempt, and I admit it freely and frankly, by some few of the Irish Members, led, I believe by the hon. Member for Cork (laughter). See how it is laughed at. The hon. Member for Cork is a Home Ruler. I differ from him just as much as I differ from any other, but let me say that movement was a movement of conciliation. It ended, or, at least, it commenced to a large extent in the Land Act that was passed by my right hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Wyndham). The hon. Member for Cork, seeing the benefits of that Act as they resulted to Ireland, has rigidly adhered to it, and to every word and every promise he made at that time, and largely because of that he is now driven outside the Irish party. *When the hon. Gentleman and some others proceeded to what they called trying to reconcile Ulster and the Protestants from Ulster and Ireland generally, they made speeches which, if they had been made by the majority of them for the last twenty years might, I admit,*



*possibly have had some effect on some of the Unionists in Ireland. Their idea was certainly a worthy idea, nobody can deny that, of bringing about reconciliation and better feeling, and the moment they do that they are denounced, and they are boycotted, and they are persecuted, and they can hardly hold an election in Ireland. The hon. Member for Cork——"*

At this critical point the Liberal Chairman of Committees (Mr. Whitley) brusquely interfered to call Sir E. Carson to order, amidst the taunting cheers of the Hibernians, and no more was heard of the Ulster leader's reasons for believing that if the All-for-Ireland policy had been supported, instead of thwarted by the majority of the Irish Party, the objections of Ulster might have been overcome.

Sir E. Carson in dropping the subject on compulsion from the Chair was only able to add : " I can only say with great respect that I am surprised if I am not entitled to show why these counties in Ulster cannot trust the majority and give that as a reason why they should be excluded from the Bill." (Hansard, June, 1912, p. 1070).

In my own brief speech on the amendment will be found at that early date, what no other section of the House, British or Irish, are likely to claim for themselves, a precise exposition of the attitude of my colleagues and myself towards Ulster which we never had reason to alter in the smallest degree and which, it is not too much to claim, the bulk of men of all parties have since got reason to deplore was not their own attitude all along. An extract or two may be forgiven :

" There are very few compromises indeed to which I, for one, would not gladly assent if the effect was to conciliate the Protestant minority. The Amendment under consideration is almost the sole exception. This is the one compromise which to Irishmen is intolerable and impossible. Some of us,



at all events, would prefer to the end of our days to be ruled by this Parliament or by the Grand Turk for that matter, rather than be assenting parties to the mutilation of a country which the hand of God and the whole course of history have made one. That is one of the things on which all Irish Protestants, as well as all Irish Catholics, think alike. That is I venture to say if the hon. Gentleman, the Member for Walton (Mr. F. E. Smith) who is not an Irishman himself, will give me leave to say so, one of the common instincts, one of the common ties of unity, one of the facts of our common mentality, which no human law can override, and which, no matter what any man may say, do constitute us one nation and not two nations. Whatever other differences we may have, we are, I think, all proud of being Irishmen ; Irishmen not merely of the North or North East, or South, or South West, but Irishmen all round the compass. .”

And again—

“The Right Hon. Member for Dublin University (Sir E. Carson) in his most candid speech, has made it as clear as crystal that every Irishman for whom he speaks, as well as those we can speak for, thinks that any proposal to cut Ireland up into Protestant or Catholic concentration camps is unthinkable and impossible. . . . So far as the Nationalists are concerned, there is no possibility of our entertaining for one moment such a proposal as is contained in this Amendment. . . . I repeat this amendment is an impossible and hateful one both to Protestants and Catholics. It is almost the only compromise I can conceive to which those who think as I do would object if the result were to allay the suspicions and win the co-operation of our Protestant fellow-countrymen. I daresay you would rule me out of order if I were on this particular occasion to go into the nature of the compromises we believe to be practical ones ; but Irish Nationalists would as soon cut off their hands



as cut off from Ireland the province which is sacred ground to all of us, from the earliest dawn of our history by thousands of our most cherished national traditions. It was the home of long dynasties of the most heroic Gaelic princes, men like Shan O'Neil, Hugh O'Neil and Owen Roe; it was the home of those Anglo-Irish Protestant patriots of the Dunganannon Convention and of the United Irishmen's days, whose names are worshipped to-day in every Catholic cabin in the South just as ardently as that of any Irish Catholic of whom our history tells us. We cannot and will not for any consideration part with our historical inheritance—we cannot part with a single Irishman within the shores of the island. On the other hand, within those shores, we respectfully invite and welcome our Protestant fellow countrymen to seek and find every form of power and honour in their own country, short of actual ascendancy. I go further—no matter how my words may be misrepresented in Ireland—and I say I should look forward to an Irish Parliament with very mixed feelings if I did not feel sure that upon the day when our Protestant fellow-countrymen can see their way to join us in organising a great National Peace Party in Ireland, exempt from all the old party trammels and passions of the past, they will find themselves in a position not merely to defend themselves against persecution, but to defend themselves far better than this House can ever defend them—nay, that in future years by their own qualities and by the natural bias of the Irish character, they will find themselves amongst the most effective and powerful elements in the governing majority of the Irish Parliament and the Irish Ministry. . . . I end as I began by saying that whenever they make up their minds to put forward proposals intended not to kill this Bill, but to make it acceptable to every reasonable Unionist in Ireland, I for one will be with them to the death and aid them in holding



their ground in honour and in power in the land which is their native land as well as it is mine."

Not a stir was made from the Ministerial side, save to scoff at every reference to the seriousness of the Ulster problem.

Thus proceeded the debates to the Third Reading on January 15, 1913, without the offer of the smallest concession to the special mentality and historical environment of Ulster; Mr. Redmond intervening on rare occasions with ceremonious speeches "faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly null"; Mr. Dillon and Mr. Devlin deserving honourable mention only for their silence; the Hibernian Party in general ranged on their benches like so many automata mechanically wound up on the touching of a spring to vote, to roar out their Hallelujah choruses at the right moments in the speeches of their demi-gods on the Treasury Bench, or to supply more offensive music when it was a question of worrying or coughing down all who differed with them—a spectacle of intellectual feebleness and insignificance not easily to be forgiven to the representatives of a nation, who for the first time and for the last, might have been the masters of the situation.

While the programme of the Downing St. breakfast-party was being thus hustled through the House of Commons "according to plan," Sir E. Carson and the Unionist leader, Mr. Bonar Law (now his sworn confederate in contingent treason) had been more formidably engaged in rousing Ulster to armed resistance. More unhappily still, the eloquence of the Hibernian leaders had been diverted to platform work in Ireland which was even more effective than Sir E. Carson himself in setting ablaze the passions of the most furibund of his Orange partisans. We have already seen the disastrous consequences of the adventure—beginning in insolence and ending in pusillanimity—into which they tempted Mr.



Winston Churchill in Belfast. Those consequences were every day exercising a more grievous influence on the temper of the North. The most moderate as well as the most fanatical could scarcely fail to see they were dealing with a Government from whom they had neither conciliation to hope for nor firmness to dread.

We have now to tell a story of open and advised illegality by the highest officers of the law for which history, or indeed romance furnishes no equal in a civilized State, unless it be the five years' war which the Irish Republican Army was afterwards enabled to carry on by copying and improving upon the methods taught them by Sir E. Carson's Provisional Government and his army equipped from Germany.

On September 24th, 1913, the conspiracy to resist Home Rule "by all means in their power, including force," took definite shape in the proclamation in Belfast of a "Central Authority for the Provisional Government of Ulster," under the presidency of Sir E. Carson. A Military Council of 84 members, together with the Officers Commanding, for the time being, the divisions and regiments of the Ulster Volunteer Force, was appointed. An Indemnity Fund of £1,000,000 was set on foot for the grim purpose of "assisting the widows and orphans, the wounded and disabled" who might suffer in the course of active service. What the active service was to be was not disguised, was indeed noisily proclaimed. It was to resist the law of the King and the Imperial Parliament — naked treason, blood-boulted rebellion. What the means were to be was made no less clear by the signing, four days afterwards, of "The Solemn League and Covenant" by which (as it was claimed) 250,000 men pledged their oaths to "stand by one another in using all means which may be found necessary." The means that were at once "found necessary" were to brigade this enormous army of Covenanters into divisions and regiments, to drill



them and manoeuvre them in the public sight under officers in the King's pay, and to arm them to the teeth—first indeed with "the wooden guns" which excited Mr. Devlin's hilarity, but presently with Mauser rifles and machine-guns "made in Germany." These preparations for civil war were carried on and instigated for many months by ex-Cabinet Ministers, Privy Councillors and army officers in innumerable speeches, for any one of which the Sinn Féin rebels of a later day would have been hanged or shot without ceremony.

Sir E. Carson, the ex-Solicitor-General, was foremost in bidding defiance to the King and his Parliament. His recklessness makes one suspect he was taking a leaf out of our own book, for we always calculated that the best means of avoiding prosecution was to seem to court it. Here are but a few pearls from the interminable string of his treasons:

"We will shortly challenge the Government to interfere with us if they dare. We will do this regardless of all consequences. They may tell us, if they like, that that is treason. We are prepared to take the consequences. (Blenheim, 27th July, 1912).

"I do not care twopence whether it is treason or not; it is what we are going to do." (Coleraine, 21st September, 1912).

"The Covenant was a challenge to the Government and they dare not take it up. . . . It was signed by soldiers in uniform and policemen in uniform and men in the pay of the Government, and they dare not touch one of them." (Belfast, May 19th, 1913).

"I know a great deal of that will involve statutory illegality, but it will also involve moral righteousness. . . . We have the repeated pledges of our great leader, Mr. Bonar Law, that . . . whatever steps we may feel compelled to take, whether they be constitutional or whether in the long run they be unconstitutional, we will have the whole of the Unionist




Party under his leadership behind us. . . . The Government know perfectly well that they could not to-morrow rely on the Army to shoot down the people of Ulster." (Belfast, July 12th, 1913).

"I hope we (the Provisional Government) shall go on sitting there from day to day until we have absolutely completed our arrangements for taking over the Government ourselves. . . . It might be, probably it will be, an illegal procedure. Well, if it is, we give the challenge to the Government to interfere with us if they dare. . . . But the Government won't interfere. They have not the courage." (Belfast, July 26th, 1913).

"I see by an announcement that his Majesty's Government are reported to have issued a warrant for my arrest. I know nothing about it and I care less. One thing I feel certain of is that the Government will never produce it, and will never execute it." (Portrush, 4th August, 1913).

"I don't hesitate to tell you that you ought to set yourselves against the constituted authority in the land. . . . We will set up a Government of our own. . . . I am told that it will be illegal. Of course it will. Drilling is illegal; I was reading an Act of Parliament forbidding it. The Volunteers are illegal and the Government know they are illegal and the Government dare not interfere with them." (Newry, September 7th, 1913).

"I see it has created something of a commotion that they have at length ascertained that we have this great General (Sir George Richardson) amongst us. . . . I tell the Government more than that. I tell them we have pledges and promises from some of the greatest generals in the Army that when the time comes and if it is necessary they will come over and help us." (Antrim, September 26th, 1913). 

No Law Officer of the Crown, if consulted, could advise otherwise than that such speeches (and they



were repeated in hundreds before reviews of many thousands of drilled rebels) must have led to the Ulster leader's conviction for treason felony if he were indicted for levying war against the King and seducing the Army from their allegiance. Sir E. Carson avowed and gloried in the statutable illegality of his words and of his preparations for civil war. Any sensational punishment, when things had been allowed to go so far, might have only stimulated a reaction in his favour. On the other hand, imbecile inaction while a province was being openly organised for rebellion against the law of the King and Parliament was the abdication of the first duty of Government, and could only convince Sir E. Carson's followers that he was right when he boasted that the feeble folk in command at Dublin Castle were cowed by his blood-thirsty threats that "if they dare to come to attack us the red blood will flow." For many months there was no real danger of "the red blood flowing" if the Government had only availed themselves of the Perpetual Coercion Act which Sir E. Carson and his friends had themselves placed at their disposal, and which the Hibernian Party had failed to use their omnipotent power to repeal. When the Ulster Provisional Government was appointed, Dublin Castle had only to publish a notice in the *Gazette* proclaiming the Provisional Government and its army as "an illegal association," and to summon Sir E. Carson under the Act of Edward III. to give securities for his good behaviour, according to the procedure he had himself made so familiar against his political opponents, and the prosaic ignominy of his fate as a warrior chief would have done more to give an amused satisfaction to all sensible citizens than to excite any commotion which the local police could not deal with. Whenever the archives of Dublin Castle yield up their secrets, it will be found that Mr. Birrell's Resident Magistrates and Police



Officers in the North assured him that at any date up to the landing of the "Fanny's" cargo of German arms, the dissolution of the Volunteers could have been effected without firing a shot, but warned him that it might soon be too late. They were chaffed for their pains and sent home with intimations that their warnings were unwelcome. Shouts of "Carson, King of the Bluffers"—the inscription on the breast of the effigy burned on the Falls Road—continued to represent the wisdom of the Hibernians and their happy-hearted Chief Secretary.

The time came when even Mr. Birrell found it necessary to do something that seemed serious. It was really something so little serious as a way of grappling with a great crisis, that it would rather have been taken for one of his jokes only that it was a sorry joke. In the December of 1913 he published a proclamation forbidding the importation of arms. Tardy, but excellent, if he had proceeded to give effect to it by vigilant preparations at the ports, and by seizing the arms already stored in dumps where his Resident Magistrates and Police Officers knew perfectly well to find them. As a matter of fact, neither then nor ever afterwards did the police lay hold of a single one of Sir E. Carson's rifles. Worse still, the Government made warlike faces at the Ulster rebels, and uttered threats from which they promptly ran away. Mr. Winston Churchill, as before, distinguished himself by announcing that the time had come "when these grave matters would have to be put to the test," and retorted from his own side if there should be any resistance Sir E. Carson's menace that "the red blood would flow." Nay, as First Lord of the Admiralty, he began business by ordering the Channel Fleet to Lamlash, within a few hours' steam of Belfast, and the air was full of preparations for a military expedition from the South as



though it were no longer possible peacefully to move a regiment or a policeman in Ulster without the leave of Sir E. Carson's Provisional Government.

This fit of governmental hysteria spread to the Army. On March 20, 1914, Gen. Hubert Gough, commanding a Cavalry Brigade at the Curragh, was sent for by the Commander-in-Chief, Sir A. Paget, with the news that his Brigade was to be utilized for "active measures" in Ulster, and was timidly sounded as to whether he and his officers could be relied on to obey. The mutiny thus fatally invited did not fail to come off. Gough got two hours to consult his officers as to whether or not they would disobey their rudimentary duty as soldiers. The General, generous-hearted and hot-headed Irishman as he was, opted to send in his papers rather than march. His officers almost to a man resolved to follow their commander and telephoned their decision to the Marlborough Barracks, where the officers of a regiment of Lancers joined in the revolt, seventy out of the seventy-six officers pledging themselves to hand in their resignations. It was a serious manifestation directly provoked by irresolution at headquarters, and now to be crowned with triumph by further irresolution. General Gough has since made it clear that when he was summoned to London by the Secretary for War (Col. Seely) he would not have hesitated to obey orders like a soldier, if these orders were plainly given. He was, on the contrary, left under the impression that he was to be left free to judge for himself whether the expedition to the North was one he could approve of, and he returned to his command at the Curragh completely justified and glorified in the eyes of his brother mutineers, claiming that he had "got a signed guarantee that in no circumstances shall we be used to force Home Rule on the Ulster people." The effect upon the *moral* of the Army is accurately



enough described by the story, if not true, assuredly *ben trovato*, told at the time of the reply of the Commander-in-Chief, Sir A. Paget, to the inquiry what his army would do if ordered to the North: "All would go well until we met the first of Carson's men somewhere north of the Boyne, when my fellows would go over to them to a man, and I should be sent as prisoner to Mount Stewart" (Lord Londonderry's place) "and have the time of my life." With a Secretary for War so apologetic, and a Commander-in-Chief so philosophic, there was no more to be said. The fit of active governmental hysterics died down. The Army was never ordered to the North, the Fleet was ingloriously ordered home from Lamlash, and Sir E. Carson might well boast louder than ever that the Army was at his beck when a campaign for the seduction of the Army, for which he might have been shot, went unpunished, and the officers who responded to his incitements were lionized for their indiscipline, in full sight of the German Emperor, who was at that moment making up his mind whether an English Army thus demoralized was worth counting in his impending World-war.

The famous proclamation for disarming Ulster was about to receive a still more contemptuous commentary even than the Curragh Mutiny, which it followed fast. On April 24, 1914 (according to the official organ of the Covenanters, the *Northern Whig*), "notwithstanding the Proclamation of the Government and the vigilance of the Customs Officers a cargo of over 35,000 magazine rifles and 2,500,000 rounds of ammunition *purchased on the Continent* was landed at Larne, Bangor, and Donaghadee." For days beforehand the affair was the talk of the province and the "many hundred private motor-cars" engaged in the slow work of discharging the cargo of the "Fanny" did not, of



course escape the eye of the police, many of whom were actual lookers-on without daring to raise a hand. They were overawed, not by the gentlemen law-breakers of the private motor-cars, but by the fear how their zeal would be regarded by their superiors in Dublin Castle. Most of the hiding-places where this vast store of firearms were stowed away were also perfectly well-known to the police authorities, and were duly reported to headquarters, but not a single search for arms was ordered anywhere in the province, nor a single rifle of the 35,000 ever taken out of the hands of the victorious gun-runners. Well might Sir E. Carson, Privy Councillor and ex-Solicitor General, not only identify himself with the illegality, but publicly incite his men to offer a bloody resistance to any officer of the law who should try to disarm them. "And now, men," he cried to the West Belfast Regiment (June 6, 1914, two months before the outbreak of the World-war), "keep your arms no matter what happens. I rely upon every man to fight for his arms to the end. Let no man take them from you. I do not care who they be, or under what authority they come, I tell you, 'Stick to your arms.'"

When such a speech following such an act of open war was left unchallenged, the Government of the King surrendered at discretion. As they and their Hibernian confederates had hitherto sinned by withholding the smallest concession from Ulster in the wise belief that to laugh at "The King of the Bluffers" and his "wooden guns" was the complete art of statesmanship, so, from the day the wooden guns were exchanged for Mauser rifles, they sinned by a cowardice which History will find as contemptible as their lack of foresight had been unpardonable.



## CHAPTER X

## THE FIRST SHADOW OF PARTITION

THE first emergence in the Home Rule debates of Partition—or “Exclusion,” as the gods called it in those days—as an alternative policy was made on January 1, 1913, when Sir E. Carson moved as an amendment on the Report stage that the province of Ulster be excluded from the operation of the Bill. The Hibernian Party and the more unreflecting of their Radical and Labour allies were still in the heyday of their confidence that the opposition in Ulster was matter for laughter rather than for graver treatment. They had just been spending the last days in Committee in boisterous merriment at the expense of “the bluffers” and “the wooden gunmen.” It was about as statesmanlike a proceeding as Mr. Winston Churchill’s abortive torchlight procession in Belfast. When the Ulster leader rose to move his amendment, they were ready with a new outburst of somewhat rowdyish horseplay. Sir E. Carson began his speech with a remarkable success in putting their merriment to shame. “I hope,” he said, “we may dispense with the holiday hilarity with which our proceedings have been carried on. I have no wish to offend these gentlemen, but I really think they do not yet understand the seriousness with which Ulster Unionists regard these matters. If they stood in my place they would resent as much and a great deal more the kind of treatment my friends and myself have been receiving for the last two days from gentlemen who think they can turn these dis-



cussions into a joke." Things had not yet reached the stage at which he could commit himself to the precise form the resistance of the Covenanters would take, or even pledge himself very definitely to take part in it in person. The omission gave point to his complaint that "no attempt had been made to conciliate them or to avert the greatest constitutional disaster that ever threatened this House." In other words, the time for some rational compromise was not even yet overpassed, and it was remarked that his speech contained scarcely a reference to the exclusion of the province of Ulster as his last word in the way of accommodation. But, with the cold solemnity with which he might pronounce a sentence of death, he left no doubt as to his own conviction that the Ulster Unionists would be right in their resistance, and that in that resistance "they would have the Unionists of Great Britain at their back." From the Unionist benches there came an underswell of deep assent more impressive than if they had got on their feet to yell, and the rest of the House was quelled into a hush in which the most thoughtless recognized almost with awe that a solemn thing had been spoken. There was no longer a mouse stirring on the Hibernian or Radical benches. Sir E. Carson in his blunt-headed way improved the impression by challenging the Chief Secretary from his own sources of information to deny the magnitude of the preparations that were being made for resistance. The blameless Birrell, like Brer Rabbit (in those days much quoted), "lay low and said nuffin." Then he tackled the Prime Minister with a question which again had an awful ring in the hushed House "whether he and his colleagues would go out through England and explain this Bill and would announce that if Ulster refused to accept it and claimed to remain as she was her



resistance would be put down by force?" The speaker, whose usual contempt for perorations equalled that of a pork-butcher for poetry, nevertheless stumbled upon a most dramatic peroration on this occasion, without seeming to know it. He wound up with a passage from the American Declaration of Independence making a last appeal against their ill-treatment by the Home Government. He suddenly stopped short where the colonists announced their decision to take up arms, and with the words: "I will read no further so long as there is yet time to avert a similar disaster," he sat down.

Mr. Asquith, always keenly—perhaps too keenly—responsive to any electric influence in his environment, and always ready with noble words to voice the emotions of the House in its finer moods, began with a tribute of subdued homage to the gravity of the occasion, which must have wounded the giddy scoffers and jeerers of an hour before in his own ranks more deeply than Carson's sharpest stings had done. He bowed down before "the spirit of seriousness so admirably exhibited" by the leader of the Covenanters, and "neither sought to ignore nor to minimise the magnitude of the danger" about which the merriment of the statesmen of the Board of Erin had hardly died away. Better than that, he seemed to counter Sir E. Carson's challenge with one that sounded more boldly still. He demanded "whether if the Bill was submitted to the British electorate, and approved, Ulster would still resist and whether the Unionist Party would be still behind them?" and intimated that he "would not be afraid to submit that issue to the British people." But what issue? If his proposal was to go to the country on a Bill containing generous concessions to Ulster—such as afterwards would have been offered on bended knees—nothing could have been wiser statesmanship or even safer



tactics. But his speech contained no hint of a single definite satisfaction to Ulster feeling: the Bill was at its last stage, and unless altered now must remain unalterable or be lost. Mr. Asquith was still thinking only of a party issue, and not of a national settlement by consent. And his weakness was that, upon the unamended Bill, he knew his Party managers shrank from appealing to the British electorate, and had no intention of doing so.

That weakness Mr. Bonar Law was not slow to fasten upon. He made a clever answer to Mr. Asquith's challenge, but one vitiated by the fact that it was no less a party answer. By all means, let the Government submit the Bill to the country: he could not speak for Ulster; but so far as his own attitude was concerned, as leader of the Opposition, it would make all the difference. If it were done and the country approved, the Unionist Party "would not in any shape or form encourage the resistance of Ulster." The pledge was a complete response to the Government's ostensible offer to go to the country; for it was the support of the Unionist Party which was the breath of life of the Ulster resistance, and, that support once withdrawn, nobody suggested that the threats of armed rebellion would any longer be persisted in anywhere outside the least responsible Orange taprooms. The trick was that he knew the Government were not going to amend the Bill, and that on a Bill offering no concessions to Ulster the Government were bound to be beaten, and would therefore not face the electorate. A poor party game of shuttlecock on both sides, and one in which the Government fared the worst, for the General Election which would have been expediency as well as statesmanship with a Bill bravely amended would have spelled sure defeat with the unamended one, and no more was heard from the Treasury Bench of Mr. Asquith's



incautious challenge. Instead, the irruption of Mr. Winston Churchill, not yet weaned from the Belfast torchlight procession spirit as the cure for Irish ills, brought the debate back from one of grave reasonableness to the old scenes of disorder, recriminations and provocations. One momentous avowal of the Opposition leader, indeed, deserved the worst that could be said of it, and was destined to bear a bloodstained responsibility for its share in screwing up the courage of the German Kaiser to the World-War.

"It is a fact," coolly observed Mr. Bonar Law, "which I do not think anyone who knows anything about Ireland will deny, that these people in the North-East of Ireland, from old prejudices, perhaps, more than from anything else, would prefer, I believe, to accept the government of a foreign country rather than submit to be governed by hon. members below the gangway."

Mr. Churchill was justified in noticing, as the Kaiser, we may be sure, did not fail to notice, this extraordinary statement of the Unionist leader "that the loyalists of Ulster would rather be annexed to a foreign country than continue their allegiance to the Crown," dotting the i's by adding: "This, then, is the latest Tory threat, that the loyalists of Ulster would prefer to be annexed to Germany than accept the constitution under the British Crown which this Bill would give them." It was a palpable hit—so palpable that he was not permitted to finish another sentence on the subject in the roar of blind fury that overswept the Opposition benches. There, however, was the astounding fact, and it was not explained away, but aggravated, by Mr. Bonar Law's sorry *distinguo* that he "had quoted what he believed to be a fact, without either approval or disapproval." The honest Tory squires might bellow till they cracked their cheeks: the



avowal stood on everlasting record, as a test of the worth of Ulster's "loyalty," and of the scruples of Unionist politicians, to be treasured in Baron von Kühlman's note-book and laid up in the young hearts professing no allegiance to any but Ireland, who were already dreaming of improving upon the Ulster example in the ranks of the Irish Republican Army.

It was the last discussion of any practical value before the Bill received its Third Reading early in 1913 in its unchanged, and consequently unchangeable, original form. Far from making any advance towards reconciliation with Ulster, the final debate made two disclosures of sinister import for the Irish Cause. Mr. Asquith revealed that a General Election there would have to be, in any event, before the Act could be put in operation, thereby cruelly putting an end to the delusion under which the Hibernian leaders had enabled the Government to pass the Parliament Act—viz., that its passing would dispose of the last obstacle to Home Rule. Also, in the course of his shillelagh practice on the heads of the Opposition, Mr. Winston Churchill dropped a hint that there would be no objection to "the four Orange counties" voting themselves out of the Bill. It was the first official intimation of the Home Rule Government's change of front from National Unity to the "exclusion" of "the four Orange counties" which was to become the basis of the Buckingham Palace Conference. Although Mr. Churchill still indulged in the fearful joy of belabouring the effigy of "Carson, King of the Bluffers," after the manner of the Falls Road, it was evident enough that the process of giving up the Policy of Derision for the Policy of Pusillanimity was already beginning to work in Ministerial minds.

It was one of the phenomena of those days that the programme of Conference, Conciliation, and



Consent, laughed out of court in the democratic House of Commons, found refuge and a far-sighted appreciation in the House of Lords. The debates on the Bill when it reached the Lords will be found full of the sober statesmanship—of the recognition that Home Rule in some shape there must ineluctably be, and that the core of the problem was how to dissipate the forebodings of the Protestant Minority—which all men now see to be elementary wisdom, but which was sadly missing amidst the flippancy and superficiality of the House of Commons' treatment of the subject. It was not for nothing the languid Upper House resolved for once to throw off its languor and to meet an hour before its usual custom and prolong its crowded sittings up to midnight. A strong current of opinion favouring a settlement by friendly Conference set in from the start in the memorable speeches of Earl Grey, the Archbishop of York, the Marquis of Lansdowne, the Earl of Loreburn, and others. Even Lord Curzon, who was then supposed to be the mirror of all that was most supercilious and overbearing in the "superior person," astonished his peers with a speech such as might effect miracles of conciliation at a Round Table. The bulk of the Irish peers, too, were full of the new spirit. The speech of Lord Londonderry was the only one that defaced the debates with any trace of the reckless pugnacity or the Orange symposia, and of the House of Commons. Lord Crewe, the Liberal leader of the House, was not empowered to answer all these very genuine yearnings for a Settlement by Consent with anything more hopeful than the demand of a sweet-spoken, but unshakeable, Shylock for his pound of flesh! The John Morley of old did, indeed, for a moment flicker up when, Lord Dunraven having asked why on earth the Government should not attempt a settlement by consent, he interjected:



"Yes, a settlement by consent, but on the lines suggested by Mr. William O'Brien." But Viscount Morley's own speech was all but inaudible, his spirit had burnt almost as low as his voice.

In Ireland, as well, the Hibernian Press, far from letting the country know that "the last obstacle" delusion was at an end, and the Partition of the country not obscurely hinted as the future Liberal substitute for National Unity, only hailed the astonishing turn of the tide towards Home Rule in the House of Lords with a shout of exultation as proof that the Peers were beaten to the ropes, as they had predicted. When Lord Dunraven in the course of a weighty speech at a National Conference of the All-for-Ireland League on March 3, which will still repay perusal by every student of history, proposed a resolution inviting the Government to take the initiative in summoning a Conference representative of all parties and denominations as the best means of realizing the growing hopes of a Settlement by Consent, his proposal was received with howls of "Factionist!" and "No Compromise!" from the Board of Erin mobs and newspapers and the local All-for-Irelanders for barely tolerating the idea were held up to execration by one vigorous Canon of the Church as "a pack of scamps and scoundrels." Professor Kettle, who combined an epigrammatic brilliancy with a plentiful lack of sense, was not to be outdone by his Hibernian patrons. He laughed any fears of Ulster out of court. At Skibbereen, he demanded that "the Imperial forces and the police force of the nation should be drawn aside and that Ireland should be left to fight it out with North-East Ulster," and at Kildare the following Sunday the "Professor of National Economics" prescribed without any appearance of a joke for such of the Orange dogs as might survive the riot that "they should be shot



or hanged or sent to penal servitude." The reign of unreason was as yet not to be disturbed.

None the less, when on June 10, 1913, the Bill presented itself for Second Reading in its Second Session, our small band made a fresh effort to give concrete effect to the eagerness for a friendly inter-party consultation before it was too late which was possessing the best minds in all parties. It was the day on which the news of George Wyndham's tragic death had reached the House, and the passing of that bright spirit brought the whole House into a hushed accord, while I suggested that "his work in Ireland would live as an immortal monument," and might even yet suggest to the rashest of those who had guiltily marred that work, when it was but half completed, that the methods by which Wyndham had victoriously overcome the age-long Agrarian difficulty offered a no less precious precedent in the present crisis. Mr. Asquith and Mr. Balfour lavishly praised, but did not imitate, and no word of reparation was heard from the Hibernian benches. The Prime Minister's courtesy towards Ulster was as faultless as usual, but he evaded every approach to any definite concession on the Government's own part by blandly referring to the "suggestion stage" at which conciliatory proposals might be sympathetically entertained. There was little difficulty in showing during my own observations, that this was to put the car before the horse since, if the Government meant concessions seriously their first duty ought to be by a confidential preliminary consultation to enlist the assent and authority of all sides when they came to be laid before the House, while if the Government shirked the duty of taking the initiative, proposals of irresponsible individuals at "the suggestion stage" would cast the whole question back into the cauldron of party politics, and would be foredoomed to failure. I hurry on from my own arguments and appeals to



both sides to their effect upon the influential personages in the debate.

The intoxication of the recent defeats of the Government at the Newmarket and Altrincham elections was in Sir E. Carson's blood and he contemptuously treated the formal submission of the Bill for its second session as a farcical way of marking time until the Government should muster up courage enough either to come up against the resistance of Ulster or meet their fate at the hands of the British electorate. But there was one passage which proved that his attitude towards any overtures of the Government less obviously futile than the suave invitation for proposals on "the suggestion stage," might even still have been very different :

"I will frankly admit the speech of the Hon. Member for Cork was the speech of a man who wants to bring about peace, but he knows perfectly well the penalties that have fallen upon himself because he has tried to win Ulster. . . . I will say this that if ever you are to bring about a United Ireland—if ever you are going to bring the Ulster portion of the community into line, you will never do it by any means except persuasion."

Mr. Bonar Law, speaking later, made a significant observation in the same direction : "I say further that if it was possible that anything on the lines of the speech of the Member for Cork could be evolved—if *he could succeed in persuading the rest of Ireland in favour of that course—if he could come to us and say 'what we propose is not utterly detested by one third of the people of Ireland, but there is a general consent in its favour'—we should all rejoice and welcome any settlement that was arrived at upon such lines.*" Who will say now that declarations like these, before Ulster was armed and finally estranged, were not worth solemn attention ?

The attention they received from the Chief



Secretary who wound up the debate was a stream of sparkling Birrellisms, which kept the Ministerialists in roars of laughter. Discussing the religious difficulty—the sorest of all difficulties—in Ulster, he revelled and rolled over in badinage of this kind :

“ He had his own views of ecclesiastics of all kinds (laughter). He had curious experiences of them at the Board of Education and in Ireland (laughter). He had enjoyed personal contact—he would not say collision—with Cardinals and Archbishops and he commended them generally to God. (Prolonged laughter).”

Magnificent perhaps as fooling, but not the wisest way of soothing lacerated feelings, and not much improved by his following it up with the assurance that “ he quite recognised the grave and serious state of things in Ulster,” for Marc Antony too “ quite recognised ” that “ Brutus was an honourable man.” But even Mr. Birrell was a bit staggered by the tone of the Unionist leader’s reception of the Conference, Conciliation and Consent proposal.

“ A great many compliments have been paid to the speech of the Hon. Member for Cork—I don’t quarrel with them,” he precipitately added to restrain the jeers of his Hibernian admirers, who supposed he had not yet ceased joking. “ Let me express my own willingness to sit in conference with the Hon. Member for Cork, who is, I hope, a friend of mine and I can assure him that my breast entertains no sort of animosity against him and never has done. . . . I quite agree with the Hon. Member that we should settle this by agreement and that it is our bounden duty if we can.”

“ Why did you not try ? ” was the dry interrogatory of the member for Cork. “ I am willing to try ” was the best answer the readiest of the wits could devise. But seeing Mr. Dillon’s reproachful eye turned upon him, the luckless Chief Secretary hastened to appease



that statesman with a suggestion which he was not slow to appropriate as his own, that however "willing to try," a Conference there could only be on condition of Sir E. Carson pinning himself first to an Irish Parliament and an Irish Executive before being admitted to the Conference room.

It was the first debate for a long time in which the tongues of all the men of mark in the Irish Party were set loose. But with what effect upon the fortunes of a settlement by consent may be inferred from the briefest summary of their speeches. Mr. Dillon added to his laurels as a prophet by the brilliant prediction that it would turn out the next year that "all this talk of civil war in Ulster was bluff and would end in nothing," as truly it did end five years later in worse than nothing—for the prophet and his true believers. By one of those rare lapses to which one of the most genial of Irishmen was subject, Mr. T. P. O'Connor's contribution to the love-feast was one which horrified the Unionist orator who followed him (Mr. Locker Lampson) into a lament over "the poisonous stream of provocative bitterness which had emanated from the Hon. Member for the Scotland Division," and Mr. (afterwards Lord Cave) one of the calmest of judicial men exclaimed: "If Mr. T. P. O'Connor represents truly the ferocity of the dominant party in Ireland, God help the Protestant Party!" Mr. Devlin was even more unfortunate in what he seriously conceived to be a speech of conciliation than in the most blood-thirsty of his platform vows to "stand up to Ulster." "When the Hon. Member for West Belfast," was the comment of one of Sir E. Carson's chief lieutenants, Mr. Ronald McNeill, "talks conciliation to us in this House, his face always reminds me of some wild animal that is going to bite somebody." And the biter was apt to get bitten, as when, to one of his amiable overtures, Sir E. Carson brutally retorted: "The observation of the Hon.



Member is an infamous lie and he knows it." Against coadjutors such as these all Mr. Redmond's magnanimity and urbanity struggled in vain. He did not suffer his gentlemen gladly, but what was to be done? His profession of love for his Protestant countrymen and of readiness to heap every possible favour upon them was perfectly genuine; his secret judgment as to the best road to Irish peace had never wavered since the Land Conference; but his conciliatory generalisations were too notoriously in conflict with the dominant doctrines of the Board of Erin to have any more healing effect upon Ulster than Mr. Devlin's about-to-bite expression of countenance. He hazarded not a solitary practical suggestion to give effect to his swelling periods of tolerant and far-sighted patriotism, and a speech of glowing eloquence, once its resounding echoes died away, did little to remove the point of the sarcasm that "no man ever talked nonsense more majestically than John Redmond." The country was allowed to drift balmily on to the "next year's" millennium predicted by the prophet Dillon.



## CHAPTER XI

## LORD LOREBURN'S INTERVENTION

SIR E. CARSON's amazing career from a Dublin lawyer "on the make" to a dictatorship of the Empire passed through three stages—the first when, if generous concessions were offered to Ulster, his opposition to the Home Rule Bill would have been as negligible as had been his opposition to George Wyndham's great Purchase Act of 1903; the second, while he was incubating his audacious plans for an Ulster Rebellion, when a resolute Government might still have put him down by means of his own Coercion Act without firing a shot; the third when, left in undisputed possession of his German armaments, he was no longer to be resisted, without an appeal to the British electorate which the Liberals shrank from making.

We were now at the third stage, when the Government and their Hibernian allies fell into a state of panic as unheroic as their previous mirthful gibes had been idiotic: when the Ulster leader spouted systematic treason without let or hindrance to what had now become a really formidable army of Volunteers panting for the signal for action, in which they counted upon the refusal of the King's Army to fire upon them. They counted above all upon the pitiable collapse of the King's Government, who chose this moment to evacuate Belfast altogether and withdraw their troops to a country camp at Hollywood at a respectful distance from the Ulster Provisional Government. Sir E. Carson even went the length of specifying the sort of action for which his preparations were made. Had



the constabulary attempted to seize the old Town Hall, the headquarters of his Provisional Government :

“ Many thousands of Volunteers from the Queen’s Island Shipyards and reinforced by other men, would have attempted to regain possession. The Central Office of the Belfast police is in the same block of buildings and as a high percentage of Belfast’s male population carry revolvers, it is doubtful whether the police could have held either the Town Hall or their Office. Long before the troops could have arrived, the streets would have been running in blood, and by the time General Macready could have reached the city from Hollywood, to take over the duties of Military Governor under Martial Law, a terrible situation would have arisen.” (Interview in *Daily Telegraph*, April 20, 1914).

Pray imagine the feelings with which all this was read by the All Highest War Lord, revolving his own plans for setting the streets of half Europe “ running with blood ” before the General Macreadys of England could arrive to trouble the good work !

It will always remain the heaviest reproach of a Liberal Ministry, which wanted neither brains nor high purpose, that two precious years were allowed to pass without one genuine effort on their part to conciliate or even to understand Ulster.

Little boots it now to recall how persistently our own small group from the start pointed out that a conciliatory attitude towards Ulster was the rudimentary wisdom of the matter and, regardless of the scoffs and insults of the worst of the Hibernians and the most ignorant of their confederates on the Ministerial side of the House, pressed precisely those proposals of friendly conference and large local autonomy which are now as I write on everybody’s lips as offering the only hope of deliverance from a loathsome civil war.

One supreme opportunity, and the last, offered



at the end of the Session of 1913 of turning the deadlock between the two Houses into a broadminded settlement by consent, and it will be the wonder and regret of History that it was not availed of. On the 11th September, 1913, Lord Loreburn published in *The Times* a letter appealing for a small friendly Conference of all Parties, unfettered by any preliminary conditions, to try whether the deadlock might not be terminated by a settlement by consent. Lord Loreburn was a life-long Liberal and enthusiast for Irish Home Rule. He was one of our foremost Counsel at the Parnell Commission, was Mr. Asquith's first Lord Chancellor, and enjoyed universal respect as a man of fine judicial temper and a winning courtesy to all men. "A document of the first political importance" was the description of his letter by *The Times*, which still retained its Unionist bias, but was already beginning to manifest that large-minded sense of the realities of the Irish situation which, in the subsequent years, was to make the old implacable journalistic foe of Parnell the most powerful influence in Britain for Irish liberty since the death of Gladstone. The most thoughtful of the Liberal organs, the *Nation*, the *Westminster Gazette*, the *Daily News*, the *Manchester Guardian* and so forth gave Lord Loreburn's appeal a discriminating, but all the more useful welcome. The great Tory papers—the *Observer*, the *Daily Telegraph*, even the *Morning Post*—were already won over to a settlement conditioned by reasonable guarantees to Ulster, and rebuked the few meaner Unionist and Hibernian sheets which affected to see in Lord Loreburn's appeal a signal of distress on the part of the Liberal Cabinet. The truth, as it turned out, was that the only obstacle to its success was the hesitation of his Liberal colleagues, still reassured by the optimism of their purblind Hibernian advisers. On the evening after the appearance of the letter in *The Times* I received at my home in Mallow a sheaf of



telegrams from the *Times*, the *Daily News*, the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Daily Chronicle*, and *Daily Express* pressing for my views. They were concentrated in my message to the *Times* :

“ I have as yet seen a summary only of Lord Loreburn’s letter, but it is a pronouncement which no Party can afford to disregard. Our All-for-Ireland motto ‘ Conference, Conciliation and Consent ’ is sufficient intimation how enthusiastically we welcome Lord Loreburn’s plea for friendly consultation before it is too late. I am absolutely convinced that an unfettered Conference such as he proposes will not separate without an agreement.”

And to the *Daily News*, I wired *inter alia* :

“ Nationalist opinion in the South notes with profound satisfaction the respectful sympathy with which the Liberal Press is treating Lord Loreburn’s letter. . . Suspend Party warfare for three months and the thing is done.”

It was one of those golden moments when there was an “ atmosphere ” of unprecedented friendliness—at least in Britain—for the attempt to do those very things which all parties are at this writing only too eager to do, after years of immeasurable anguish and bloodshed. It was even announced from Balmoral that King George—long a genial convert to Home Rule—“ was using his good offices ” with two guests so worthily typical of the two great British parties as Lord Lansdowne and Sir John Simon, “ in the direction of bringing the political leaders together to discuss Home Rule.” Mr. Redmond alone was dumb. As at every critical juncture since 1903, he allowed Mr. Dillon and Mr. Devlin to make up his mind for him, and as on the Land Purchase Bill of 1903 Mr. Dillon and Sir Edward Carson were, for destructive purposes, now again agreed. Mr. Dillon proclaimed that “ he would enter no Conference ” unless Sir Edward Carson would first declare himself a Home Ruler,



which was a characteristically rash oracle, for a few months afterwards he was glad to enter the Buckingham Palace Conference with Sir E. Carson without any such condition. He gave the cue to his leader and followers for the defeat of Lord Loreburn's proposal by raising the cry that "appeals for a Conference coming from the friends of Home Rule were regarded as flags of distress and would only encourage the Orange leaders to fresh extravagance of threats and violence." Mr. Devlin alluded with lofty scorn to "some references on the part of certain individuals to the question of compromise on the Home Rule Bill"—he who was a little later to accept the one irreparable "compromise" of Partition and to coerce his Hibernians into swallowing it—and dismissed "all this talk about conciliation and Conference-mongery" as meant to "defeat the Home Rule Bill and to smash up the Irish movement." He held the true policy was "to stand up to Ulster" and he "stood up to Ulster" himself by departing for a distant meeting in Connacht where he undertook if the police and military would only stand aside to "wipe Carson and his Covenanters off the face of the earth." After a week or two of which propaganda, the *Freeman* found it safe to announce that the Loreburn Conference idea was an "exploded idea" and that "Lord Loreburn's *ballon d'essai* was a tangled mass of wreckage."

The cruel fallacy of all this "no compromise" cry was that the compromise had already been made and by the very man who raised the cry. The only reason why Lord Loreburn had interfered at all was that the "bluff and threats of the Ulster leaders," to use Mr. Dillon's words, had already so far "intimidated the Government and the National Party" that the Prime Minister had pledged himself to refer the whole matter to the British electorate before a Home Rule Act was put in operation—that Mr. Winston Churchill



had openly gone over to the Partitionists with an offer of "the four Orange Counties" to Sir E. Carson—and that the "National Party" were so successfully intimidated that they did not offer a word of protest against the one surrender or the other.

Sir E. Carson of course declined with bitter sarcasm Mr. Dillon's preliminary condition, but on the main point of throwing cold water upon Lord Loreburn's peace proposal spoke altogether after Mr. Dillon's own heart. A closer study of his words, however, made it clear that his objection to the Conference was based on the shadowy distinction between "Local Government" and Home Rule, and that he was only manoeuvring to avoid any suspicion in the minds of his own braves that he was flying "a flag of distress" himself, when he fed their fires of indignation by reminding them: "Is it not strange that all this talk about the feelings of Ulster never occurred before to the Liberal Party? When they took up this Bill and Mr. Asquith and Mr. Redmond were meeting together, they framed this measure without any concern about us because they believed that it was all plain sailing." While, of course, no man could honestly propose a Home Rule pledge to Sir E. Carson as the first condition of a parley, the striking fact is to be noted that, in the whole of the discussions raised by Lord Loreburn's letter, neither from him nor from any speaker or newspaper in the Unionist camp was there yet a whisper of that Partition of Ireland as a condition of settlement which was to be the torch of discord during the eight following years. Had Mr. Asquith and Mr. Redmond only shown the high virtue not to be afraid to seem afraid, the Loreburn Conference must have assembled under every circumstance that could favour a noble enterprise of peace. The Irish leader, and the British Prime Minister stood tongue-tied until the golden sands ran out, and the denouncers of "conciliation and Conference-mongery"



had their victory for nine months more, when they and their leaders did very truly raise "a flag of distress" too late to conceal their ignominy and panic.

It was on May 12, 1914, in moving that the Committee stage of the Home Rule Bill, on its last appearance in the House of Commons should be formal and that "all questions should be put from the Chair without amendment or debate," Mr. Asquith gave the first public intimation that Home Rule was about to be given up for Partition. Under cover of leaving the door open for "an agreed settlement," the Prime Minister announced that "while we shall ask the House to give this Bill a Third Reading before we separate, we shall make ourselves responsible for introducing an Amending Bill in such a manner that the two Bills shall become law practically at the same time." Mr. Bonar Law promptly, with a certain exultation but with still more contempt, fastened upon the admission that the Government "which had been drifting for the past six months and was drifting still" had "now made a distinct advance and was now going to introduce an Amending Bill which would fundamentally alter the present Bill." He tauntingly invited the Prime Minister and Mr. Redmond "between whom the real crux of the question lay" to take the House into their confidence as to what the Amending Bill was to be. Obviously the Prime Minister's announcement must have been concerted with Mr. Redmond and his Hibernians. If they objected, it was in their power to put their Governmental betrayers out of office in the division lobby that evening. No less obviously Mr. Redmond knew that Partition in some shape was to be the blood and bone of the Amending Bill. His last doubts, had he any, were dispelled by Mr. Lloyd George, who on this occasion for the first time showed his hand as the villain of the drama and avowed that the "Exclusion" of any counties that chose to follow Sir E. Carson was



the object of the new departure. Under these circumstances Mr. Redmond had to go through a performance perhaps the most humiliating that ever fell to the lot of an Irish leader. He had first to simulate extreme surprise and indignation at the betrayal in a burst of reheated passion which bore too evident traces of being studied by the midnight oil. He wrathfully pointed to the delight on the Unionist benches as "another lesson to the Government of the inevitable effect of making advances to the Opposition"—forgetful of the fact that the Government advance could never have been made without his own consent, and that this particular "advance" meant the Partition of his country. He, indeed, majestically reserved his freedom of action when the Amending Bill was under discussion, but quite spoiled an excellent piece of playacting by announcing amidst a general titter that for the present he and his Party intended to go into the Division lobby with his betrayers. To pass the Bill at any price—even though a Bill repealing it was to be passed simultaneously—was the one plank he clung to in the wreckage. He had to wind up with this sorry piece of rhetoric for consumption in Ireland: "They had the consolation of knowing that the vision which had sustained them through darkness, suffering and oppression in the past was about to be realized and that in a few weeks the triumph of their cause would be consummated."

"In a few weeks the triumph of their cause" was in matter of fact "consummated" when on May 25, the final Third Reading of the Government of Ireland Bill was passed on the solemn undertaking of the Prime Minister that an Amending Bill decreeing Partition would be passed into law "at the same time." An occasion which a blindfolded Irish public was led to believe marked the crowning triumph of their nation marked in reality the most cruel fraud upon popular credulity by which Irish leaders ever



disgraced themselves. The Prime Minister, in a few perfunctory sentences, renewed in the most distinct terms his pledge that the Amending Bill would be introduced while the Home Rule Bill was still before the House of Lords, and left no doubt what the Amending Bill was to be by announcing that its object had been "most clearly stated by my right Hon. friend (Mr. Lloyd George) with my complete assent in the course of the debate on Wednesday, the 12th of this month"—namely, "exclusion" to any needful extent to appease Sir E. Carson. The first Clause of the Bill nominally passed established one Parliament for all Ireland. The Amending Bill to which the Government and the Irish Party now pledged themselves gave that First Clause the lie direct and gave up the last hope of a Parliament for all Ireland. In presence of this appalling surrender of all that made Home Rule worth fighting for, Mr. Redmond and his Party spoke not a word of protest. Indeed the Irish leader spoke not a word at all. The deed was too shameful to be defended.

Only one voice was raised by a representative of Ireland in this supreme hour of her fate. It was the protest which I was commissioned to make in the name of my All-for-Ireland colleagues. As it was the only one from any quarter against the vote which made Partition an acknowledged article of the creed of "the Home Rule Government" one or two passages from my speech may be found of interest even at this day. Having declared that the Ministerial pretext for not disclosing the contents of the Amending Bill for fear of offending the susceptibilities of the House of Lords in whose House it was to be introduced "was not straight dealing either with Ireland or with England," and remarked that the device "somehow conveyed to me the impression of a last desperate throw of ruined gamblers," I proceeded:

"The game was lost for Ireland the day



when the Hon. Member for Waterford and his friends consented to the Partition of Ireland. (Interruptions). That fact will never be forgotten for them and will not easily be forgiven to them in spite of the cheers with which their treason is received on the Radical benches opposite. All that has happened since is only a consequence of their policy of bitterly opposing any genuine concession to Ulster at the right time, and now consenting to the concession of all others which will not only fail to conciliate Ulster, but will rouse millions of the Irish race against your Bill and indeed against all British party politicians impartially. We all know the object of this policy of adjournment to the House of Lords is to put off for a few weeks more the day of inevitable disillusion for the Irish people and to enable the Member for Waterford in the meantime to brag that some tremendous victory has been gained by the ghastly farce of this Third Reading to-night. . . . The Government are determined to pass this Bill—yes, but they are equally determined not to put it in force in its most vital particular. The Prime Minister confessed only a few minutes ago that this Bill is only a first instalment and that the second instalment is to nullify the first. . . . Any Bill that purposes to cut off Ulster permanently or temporarily from the body of Ireland is to me worse than nothingness, and I think you will find millions of Irish Nationalists will be of the same opinion. The Member for Waterford spoke as if the technical passage of this Bill will be a joyday for Ireland as a nation. Sir, it will be on the contrary one of the grossest frauds that ever was perpetrated on a too confiding Irish people. It will be little short of a cruel practical joke at the expense of their intelligence as well as of their freedom. They will have the cup of liberty presented to their lips, but only on condition that their lips must not touch it. . . . This Act will be born with a rope around its



neck. It is not even intended to be enforced. It is to be repudiated by its own authors in the particular of all others which will wound Irish Nationalists to the heart and which will blot out the very name of Ireland as a nation. Sir, the difference between us and the Party who sit behind us is that we are ready for almost any conceivable concession to Ulster that will have the effect of uniting Ireland, but we will struggle to our last breath against a proposal which will divide her and divide her eternally, if once Ireland's own representatives are consenting parties. . . . Of course we all know you have the voting power to pass this Bill as a sort of mechanical toy to amuse a people whom you very stupidly suppose to be a nation of children. But you know that this Bill does not mean business, and so long as it is clogged, as the Prime Minister to-night admits it is clogged, by a Ministerial pledge of a repealing Bill for the mutilation of Ireland, we regard this Bill as no longer a Home Rule Bill, but as a Bill for the murder of Home Rule such as we have understood it all our lives and we can have no hand, act or part in the operation."

My colleagues and myself abstained from voting. To vote with the Government would have been to give our sanction like that of the Hibernian Party, to the avowed scheme for the mutilation of Ireland. By declining to vote we at least did something to save the future by placing it on record that there was one body of Irish representatives, however small, who refused to be accomplices in the infamy. We did not doubt that our action, temperate though it was, would bring a tempest of misrepresentation about our ears. Looking back upon the scene now, there seems an element of diabolical humour about what happened. For it was the seventy Irish representatives who had just sentenced their country to Partition who postured as the patriots and wise men, and it was the seven Nationalists, who made the only protest in their power



in the name of a betrayed nation, who in the face of a grinning House of Commons were saluted with yells of "Factionists!" and "Traitors!" by the triumphant Hibernians. The grim irony did not even stop there. The subsidised Irish Press, with one voice, held us up to the execration of the country with the cry that we "had voted against Home Rule," and, under cover of that villainous falsehood, five or six hundred All-for-Ireland County Councillors and District Councillors were, at the Local Government elections at that moment pending, subjected to ferocious persecution and a considerable number of them expelled from public life. Personally, we had the ample revenge of despising our calumniators, but it must be confessed that there was something heartbreaking in the thought that the people had no means of knowing, and indeed have never come to know of what an abominable untruth they were the victims, and lighted their bonfires for the passage of Home Rule without the slightest suspicion that they were all the time celebrating their own condonation of Partition.

If they lighted bonfires five years later it would be to burn the famous "Act on the Statute Book" in its flames with execrations, which was indeed the fate it received from Mr. Lloyd George, with general consent, in his Act of 1921.

The Loreburn peace proposal was wrecked and the first stage of Partition successfully negotiated. But the victors were so little at ease with their work that they immediately set themselves to organise a peace conference on their own account, making it is true a pompous pretence of effecting Lord Loreburn's object, but in reality so devised as quite certainly to defeat his hopes from an "unfettered conference" and serving only as a further crafty move in the Partition game.

The Conference which the King was induced to summon at Buckingham Palace on 21st July, 1914,



was born only to have its brief life cursed by every evil gift a malignant fairy god-mother could throw into its cradle. It came too late. The events of the previous twelve months—the incidents at the Curragh, the landing of the German armaments at Larne, the dazed incompetence of the nominal Government of the country—had filled the Covenanters with a confidence akin to insolence. The Conference was a jumble of irreconcilable elements. Only two of its nine members were Irish Nationalists ; and one of the two was the man whose hatred of any form of friendly settlement by Conference had been an obsession bordering on monomania ever since 1903 ; and who shipwrecked Lord Loreburn's proposal by refusing to enter into any Conference until Sir E. Carson had first abjured his objection to Home Rule. The immense body of Conciliationist opinion in Ireland was left out of consultation altogether. Worst of all, the object of the Conference, as announced to the House of Commons by Mr. Asquith, was one destructive of the first principle of Home Rule, namely—"to consider the possibility of defining the area to be excluded from the operation of the Government of Ireland Bill." It was not even to discuss the possibility of substituting Partition for Home Rule, but only of "defining the area to be excluded." It was the first time the separation of Ulster from Ireland was publicly avowed as a practicable programme by any Party—even Sir E. Carson's—and now "the Home Rule Government" and the Hibernian Party went to Buckingham Palace recognising that it was a programme not merely possible, but already settled behind the backs of the Irish people, and that the only business to be discussed was to define the extent to which Ireland was to be mutilated. The only question in debate at Buckingham Palace, it is now certain, was whether it was six counties, or only four, that were to be torn from the body of Ireland. It was upon this



question—one of unimaginable meanness compared with the principle of the Partition of an ancient nation, which does not seem to have been under debate at all—that the Buckingham Palace Conference, in Mr. Asquith's words, "was unable to agree," and, after four sittings, "brought its meetings to a conclusion." The Government sternly refused any opportunity of even discussing in the House of Commons this astounding transformation in the fortunes of Home Rule. The Hibernian Party took good care by their newspapers and organisers, to prevent the people of Ireland from understanding, unless in the most misty way, that their representatives had killed Home Rule by killing the only thing that made it worth having—the integrity of Ireland as a sovereign and immemorial nation. It was many a day before the Irish masses had any but the faintest conception that the morning Mr. Redmond and Mr. Dillon entered Buckingham Palace with such a programme, they committed themselves to the Partition of their country with a completeness from which it was never again in their power to recede.



## CHAPTER XII

## THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE WORLD WAR

WHAT was Sir E. Carson's share in deciding the German Emperor for his World-War? is a question which has hitherto been ignored as an unpleasant topic, but which History will unquestionably insist upon investigating. Nobody except Mr. Dillon would have thought of accusing the Ulster leader and his Covenanters of being in consciously guilty relations with a German spy. Sir E. Carson had, of course, as little prevision of what was coming as he had when he rivalled Mr. Dillon in his gloomy forebodings of the repudiation and general bankruptcy that were to follow the Wyndham policy of 1903. The problem is not what Sir E. Carson was thinking, but what the Kaiser was thinking, and how far his knowledge of what was going on in Ulster affected his meditations whether *Der Tag* had arrived. It was an innocent thing enough for Sir E. Carson to accept the German Emperor's invitation to lunch on August 29th 1913 (as his Orange organ in Belfast proudly announced at the time). We may be quite sure they did not discuss plans for an Ulster Rebellion to cripple the arm of England whenever His Majesty gave the signal. But it is a significant bit of evidence that Ulster was very much in His Majesty's thoughts at the time, and his notorious partisanship with his fellow Protestants of the North had assuredly not cooled since he used to invite the former Ulster leader, Col. Saunderson, to his board. It was before August 29th, 1913, Sir E. Carson had made some of his most violent speeches of defiance, including his announcement at Belfast



(July 26) " I hope in September to call together the whole of the Ulster Council and complete our arrangements for taking over the Government ourselves upon the day that Home Rule is put on the Statute-Book," volunteering the admission that " it will probably be an illegal procedure : if it is we give the challenge to the Government to interfere with it, if they dare." All of which his Imperial host of a few weeks after might not unreasonably construe as proof that a widespread rebellion against the authority of the King and Parliament was brewing.

Then the despatch to Ireland of Baron Von Kühlman was a still more significant portent. He was not a poor " spy " carrying his life in his hands, but a German Minister of the first consequence and an intimate adviser of his Emperor. And Baron Von Kühlman's visit, be it marked, a few months before the outbreak of the war, was made not to the Sinn Féin leaders or to the South, but to Belfast, where he was lionised by the military Commanders of the Ulster Volunteer Army and was enabled to inspect " eight battalions armed with Mauser rifles and accompanied by two Colt machine guns and a Maxim " ! Who can doubt what sort of report was carried back to his Imperial Master by Baron Von Kühlman, who had seen nothing but a province teeming with armed rebels, a King's army honeycombed with mutiny and a Government paralysed with vacillation and terror ? Who can fail to understand the effect upon a man whose consuming speculation at the time must have been the part England would or could play if he unloosed his hordes against France ?

Again, it was little more than a month after a Cavalry Brigade at the Curragh had with impunity refused to march North, when the news came that the *Fanny* had successfully run her cargo of arms from Hamburg through the lines of patrolling British war-ships which refused to see. Is it credible that the



purchase and transport of German arms and munitions sufficient to equip an army, and their loading and free departure from His Majesty's principal seaport can have escaped the vigilance of a War-lord whose thoughts at the moment turned above all else upon whether England was or Was not in a position to take part in a Continental war? The questions where these arms came from, who purchased them (if they were really purchased), how the *Fanny* succeeded in loading her cargo and clearing the great port of Hamburg without interruption, and what became of the cargo after it was landed, were the first any Government worthy of the name ought to have cleared up by interrogating, if necessary under the Star Chamber provisions of his own Coercion Act persons like Sir E. Carson, who openly identified themselves with the expedition. But no such questions were asked, and the mystery would to this day remain a mystery, only for the publication of the "story," which Sir E. Carson told Col. Repington "a man who had been on board the *Fanny* on its famous gun-running exploit was writing" (of this publication more hereafter). Full of enlightenment though Mr. Ronald McNeill's book is<sup>1</sup>, we will probably have to wait for the completion of our information for some official revelation of the transaction from the German side like Lieutenant Von Spindler's account of his own gun-running expedition to Kerry later when it was the Sinn Féiners who were the consignees.

It is notorious that the Orange masses looked to the sabre-rattling Protestant Kaiser as their deliverer, as their ancestors had looked to King William of Orange. Even one of the most sober leaders of the Ulster Council—Right Hon. Thomas Andrews—did not hesitate to say, "If we were deserted by Great Britain, I would rather be governed by Germany

<sup>1</sup> *Ulster's Stand for the Union.* By Mr. Ronald McNeill. London. 1922.



than by Patrick Ford and John Redmond and Company." Perhaps the most characteristic of all the Ulster fighting-men, in the straightforwardness as well as obstinacy of the breed, was Captain Craig, M.P. (afterwards to be Sir James Craig, "Premier" of the Six Counties "Parliament", and the future Minister and Chamberlain of the King) candidly blurted out: "There is a spirit spreading abroad which I can testify from my personal knowledge that Germany and the German Emperor would be preferred to the rule of John Redmond, Patrick Ford, and the Molly Maguires." Above all, what must have been the conclusion of the German Emperor when he read that Mr. Bonar Law, speaking for a Unionist Party composed of a majority of the representatives of England, had made with quite evident relish in the House of Commons the following astounding revelation of the mentality of "Ulster"?

"It is a fact which I do not think anyone who knows anything about Ireland will deny, that these people in the North-East of Ireland, from old prejudices, perhaps, more than anything else, from the whole of their past history would prefer, I believe, to accept the Government of a foreign country rather than submit to be governed by the hon. gentlemen below the gangway."

The Kaiser must have been the last to have any doubt what was "the foreign country" referred to, and can have had little less difficulty in making up his mind when weighing the probabilities of England standing up to the armies and fleets of Germany, that the House of Commons was as debauched as the Army, or as the Ulster emissaries who were negotiating for cargoes of German rifles and machine-guns from Hamburg, to be employed in rebellion against the law of Parliament, of which the King constitutes the first Estate. While the Kaiser's orders for the mobilisation must have been already



in type, on July 13, 1914, Sir E. Carson gave his benediction to a resolution practically announcing that the Ulster Rebellion would be simultaneous with the German declaration of war, in words scarcely less definite than an ultimatum: "That in view of the imminence of the final struggle against Home Rule, we call upon our leaders to take whatever forward steps they consider necessary, inasmuch as we, like our forefathers, stand upon our guard, and do resolve, by the blessing of God, rather to go out and meet the danger than to await it."

Once more, be it freely conceded, Sir E. Carson and his foolish friends did not know; the unfortunate point is that the Kaiser did. When in the years to come, the favourite outcry against Ireland was that Sinn Féin "stabbed England in the back" by importing German arms and courting a German alliance, those who raised it failed to remember that, while the Emperor was coming to his fateful decision, the Irish Republican Army was not yet in existence, and Sir Roger Casement had not yet been heard of in Berlin, but the Ulster Covenanters were talking of going over to Germany, and looking to Germany for their arms, and openly telling a shivering Government that the hour for the Ulster Rebellion had come. When all the evidence sees the light, posterity—even English posterity—will perhaps judge more sternly those who "stabbed England in the back" by helping to precipitate the World-War in the name of loyalty, than those who, after the mischief was done, faced the might of England in clean fight and cheerfully gave up their lives for their ideals, when the contingent rebels who to the last hour before the war gave aid and comfort to the Kaiser were kissing King George's hands for Cabinet Ministerships and Premierships on the winning side.



## CHAPTER XIII

## THE LAST STRAW FOR YOUNG IRELAND

THE preparations for rebellion which brought Sir E. Carson to be a Cabinet Minister instead of to the gallows inflicted two grievous injuries upon England. They had much to do, as we have seen, with the German Kaiser's determination to begin the World-War, and they laid down a precedent for Southern Rebellion to which is directly to be traced the responsibility for the succeeding five years' wars for the Irish Republic.

The official historiographer of the rebellion that did not come off, Mr. Ronald McNeill, M.P., tells us the story of the Larne gun-running expedition in the early part of 1914 on the authority of a manuscript narrative by its commander, a brave but feather-brained ex-apprentice of Messrs. Harland and Wolff's shipyard, named Crawford<sup>1</sup>. It is scarcely surprising that the book had been published for a considerable time before any newspaper ventured to notice it. In no Irish newspaper has its publication ever been announced at all, and in the British press the boycott has been all but as complete. It is packed with revelations which, in sterner days, would have consigned the author to the Tower and sentenced his book to be burned by the hands of the common hangman. Mr. McNeill makes no disguise of the Ulster leader's shrewd suspicion that, in importing their armaments from Germany, four months before the outbreak of the World-War, they were doing something, at the least, not unacceptable to the Kaiser :

<sup>1</sup> *Ulster's Stand for the Union*. By Mr. Ronald MacNeill. London. Murray. 1922.



"It may be doubted," he innocently observes, "with the knowledge that we now possess, whether the German Government would have been greatly incensed at the idea of a cargo of arms finding its way from Hamburg to Ireland in the spring of that year without the knowledge of the British Government."

The book, in fact, makes it clear that the cargo could never have started from Germany without the connivance of the most highly organised bureaucracy in the world. Where the armaments actually came from is no better explained than by the statement that the seller was an honest Jew broker in Hamburg "B.S." Who "B.S." may be, and what were his relations with the port authorities, or with higher powers, History will doubtless show an affectionate solicitude to discover. The honest Hebrew offered Sir E. Carson's agent a choice between cheap Italian and Russian rifles and a supply of 20,000 new Austrian and German rifles with bayonets. "The last mentioned of these alternatives was much the most costly, being double the price of the Italian and nearly treble that of the Russian arms ; but it had great advantages over the other two. The Austrian and German patterns were both first-rate ; the rifles were up-to-date clip-loaders, and what was the most important consideration, ammunition for them could be easily procurable in the United Kingdom." The costly Mausers and Mannlichers accordingly were the choice of Ulster. How this enormous weight of armaments (15,000 rifles and bayonets had to be brought from Austria) could have been assembled and packed in a single German port, and conveyed through the Kiel Canal without attracting the eye of a single German official during the month while the operation lasted, is a miracle which is only deepened by Mr. McNeill's ingenuous explanation. A miracle-worker, however, the mysterious "B.S." turned out to be :

"Whether any suspicion had in fact been aroused



remains unknown. Anyhow the barges were ready laden with a tug waiting until the tide should serve about midnight for making a start down the Elbe and through the Canal to Kiel. *The modest sum of £10 procured an order authorising the tug and barges to proceed through the Canal without stopping and requiring other shipping to let them pass.* A black flag was the signal of this privileged position, which suggested the 'Jolly Roger' to Crawford's thoughts and gave a sense of insolent audacity when great liners of ten or fifteen thousand tons were seen making way for a tug boat towing a couple of lighters."

There was nothing so daring in the expedition as the suggestion that the All-Highest War Lord whose Baron Von Kühlman had just returned from Ulster, and who had but a short time previously entertained Sir E. Carson to luncheon, had not the remotest notion of the destination of the expedition which was for a month fitting out in the chief port of his Empire, and had an army of port officials so infantilely corrupt that "the modest sum of £10" was sufficient to bribe them into letting the rebel armaments pass unchallenged through the Kiel Canal and forcing "great liners of ten or fifteen thousand tons" to do homage to the black flag of the Belfast ex-apprentice. We shall all be delighted to make honest "B.S.'s" closer acquaintance whenever the Berlin and Hamburg archives yield up their secrets.

Mr. McNeill's endeavours to invest the Crawford expedition with a halo of romance display too much candour not to bring merciless ridicule upon his hero. In the matter of daring, it was a mere schoolboy adventure compared with Von Spindler's gun-running cruise in the *Aud* in the following year, with a cargo of arms consigned to a rebel destination in a different part of Ireland, for Von Spindler had to pierce his way through a great British fleet off the Scottish coast, the least destroyer of which could have sent him to the



bottom at the first alarm. In the case of the *Fanny*, dealing with a Government like that of Mr. Asquith, danger there was none. Nothing could, indeed, be unkindier than the comic relief imputed by Mr. McNeill to the adventure from his own side. The leaders of the Ulster Provisional Government (with the one exception of Sir E. Carson) the bold Crawford found to be a pack of incapables and poltroons. To the Chief he addressed himself in desperation, to know if the Provisional Government meant business. The interview is worthy of the best comic business in the pantomime of old. "I shall carry out the coup if I lose my life in the attempt" quoth the bold Crawford. "Now, Sir Edward, I want to know are you willing to back me to the finish in this undertaking? If you are not, I don't go." What could be more sensible? Or what finer passage can you produce me in literature than the response of the Chief?—

"We were alone, Sir Edward was sitting opposite to me. When I had finished, his face was stern and grim and there was a glint in his eye. He rose to his full height, looking me in the eye; he advanced to where I was sitting and stared down at me and shook his clenched fist in my face, and said in a steady determined voice which thrilled me, and which I shall never forget: 'Crawford, I'll see you through this business, if I should have to go to prison for it.' I rose from my chair; I held out my hand and said: 'Sir Edward, that is all I want, I leave to-night, good-bye.'"

Mrs. Micawber was not more sublime in her most valiant hour of determination never to desert her excellent husband, than Sir Edward in his covenant to do a short time in jail, if his myrmidon "should lose his life in the attempt." And mark the cheerfulness with which he took the prospect of "having to go to prison for it" in the ordinary course of business, that being his lawyerly matter of fact way of discussing



with the confidential Crawford the epoch-making catastrophe which he had led the trembling Prime Minister and his Hibernian advisers to believe was to result if a hair on his sacred head was touched.

What exactly was the danger of anybody "losing his life," over which there was all this display of emotion, Mr. McNeill leaves us wondering. True Mr. Winston Churchill, by a tragic gesture, had ordered the Fleet to Lamlash, where it was in a position to patrol the Irish Sea as effectively as a London suburban resident might survey his back garden. But the Ruler of the King's Navee was not going to be beaten in the fun by Mr. Crawford's black flag or by the protestations of Sir Edward Micawber. From the beginning of February to the 24th of April, Mr. Crawford was fooling about the seas with his pirate craft, the *Fanny*, with every conceivable precaution to attract attention—now flying from Hamburg to Belfast to screw up the courage of his Provisional Government by threatening to run his cargo ashore, or throw it overboard, unless they toed the line—now cruising in Danish waters, in the British Channel, off the Tuskar—at one moment transshipping his armaments from one ship to a second and a third one—at another losing the *Fanny* altogether and rushing about from London to Holyhead and besieging telegraph-offices with wires to inquire for her—and the Fleet paid no more heed to his peregrinations than if Mr. Churchill's dreadnoughts and destroyers were so many painted ships upon a painted ocean. Nor was the festive Mr. Birrell—"the Playboy of the Western World," as he had now come to be called, after Synge's hero—to be outdone as soon as the fun came within his own jurisdiction. "Half the motor-cars of the province" were collected for the discharge of the arms without disturbing the sleep of the Chief Secretary or his hosts. The wires of the King's Post Office were "earthed" by his liege subjects and we are told :



"The police and coastguards were peacefully picketed in their various barracks—they were shut in and strongly guarded. No conflict took place anywhere between the authorities and the Volunteers, and the only casualty of any kind was the unfortunate death of one coastguardman from heart disease at Donaghadee."

Whether from excess of indignation or excess of laughter, Mr. McNeill forbears to specify. A telegram with the single word "Lion" was despatched to Sir E. Carson and to Lord Londonderry in London, and the fine old Irish soldier, Lord Roberts, is not spared the smirch on his memory of recording his cry of "Magnificent!" on learning the success of this ridiculous exploit at the expense of the King's Fleet and the King's honour. Doubtless nobody was thoughtful enough to include the Kaiser among the recipients of the "Lion" telegram; but His Imperial Majesty had ample means of his own of learning the "magnificent" news of the demoralisation of England's Fleet at a moment when he must have been anxiously making up his mind whether or not to fight her. The astounding thing is that the particulars of this characteristic "Ulster Stand for the Union" are related, not merely without any suspicion that the author is convicting his heroes and himself of stark treason for which three months later men were being shot, but with all a schoolboy's gusto for their "magnificent" adventure "at the very time when Seely and Churchill" (that is to say, the King's Secretary for War and the King's First Lord of the Admiralty) "were worrying lest 'evil-disposed persons' should raid and rob the scantily stocked Government stores at Omagh and Enniskillen."

Prudence might have taught even the most purblind Government that the example of defiant law-breaking at Larne would be imitated in the South. When on July 26th the Sinn Féin "White Yacht"



landed its cargo of arms at Howth, the Government were found more irresolute and self-contradictory than ever. First, they despatched a Resident Magistrate (Mr. Harrell) to seize the Nationalist arms ; when the attempt failed and resulted only in the King's Own Borderers firing without orders and massacring men, women and children at Bachelor's Walk, Mr. Birrell tried to appease the Nationalists by dismissing the unfortunate Resident Magistrate, but only succeeded in sinking deeper into the contempt with which all men now regarded an Executive without the pluck to molest the cargo of the *Fanny* nor the consistency to let the cargo of the *White Yacht* go free.

The cheerful imbecility of the Government was maintained in the face of an Ulster now alive with an army regimented, armed to the teeth and provided with every requisite, from machine-guns to an Ambulance Corps officered by great ladies, for their openly proclaimed campaign against the law of their King and his Parliament. Before many months the teachings of Sir E. Carson filled the South with a rival army of Irish Volunteers, drilling, arming and parading at vast reviews after the Northern model.

The attitude of "The Party" to the new Irish Volunteer Movement was at first one of contempt. As soon as it grew too strong to be ignored, they abandoned their indifference for an attempt to gain control of the Volunteers by methods of tyranny which were eventually to prove "The Party's" own undoing. Discontent with a degenerate Parliamentaryism had long been fermenting, in secret among the young men of Ireland. Most of them in the South still clung to the All-for-Ireland movement, with its broad doctrines after Thomas Davis' heart, as a last means of interposing an honest barrier against the tide of pseudo-nationality and corruption that was overflowing the country. Another body of young idealists—principally in Dublin and its neighbour-



hood—were gathering around Mr. Arthur Griffith who, so long ago as 1906, had laid the foundations of a *Sinn Féin* movement wholly disconnected with the subsequent uprising for an Irish Republic. By an odd freak of fate, the English newspaper men who swarmed over to Dublin after the Easter Rising of 1916, puzzled by the various categories of “Irish Volunteers,” “National Volunteers” and “Ulster Volunteers,” heard for the first time of *Sinn Féin*, the name of which was almost the only part of Mr. Griffith’s original organisation which then survived, and ignorantly pounced upon it as a picturesque nickname for the Rebels of Easter Week.

Mr. Griffith was a thinker and writer of high purpose, of a tolerant temper and a dogged disregard for obstacles, but he lacked the gifts of speech and the indefinable spell of “personality” which must be there in order to inflame millions of men to follow in the train of a new National prophet. The only programme he specified with precision was the withdrawal of the Irish members from Westminster after the example which Deak set in Hungary. It was not the Parliamentary manoeuvrings of the Hungarian deputies in withdrawing from Vienna in 1861, it was the military overthrow of Austria at Sadowa that achieved the independence of Hungary. The same policy had been anticipated, so far as Ireland was concerned, in the famous “Repeal Year” and had defied the combined genius of O’Connell and Davis to make it practicable. It would have proved equally visionary now without the World War. The dislike of Parliamentaryism among thoughtful Irishmen was growing ever deeper, but the Parliamentaryism which was moving their repugnance was not the efficient Parliamentaryism of Parnell, which had all sorts of rich achievements to its credit, it was the Parliamentaryism which had parted with the independence of Parnell and sunk into a parasite of the



English Liberal Party. The remedy might still lie in a reversion to the old model, rather than in throwing away Ireland's only available weapon of war until at all events some better one presented itself. Hence Mr. Griffith's gallant and single-minded efforts were of no avail, and the *Sinn Féin* movement proper had almost disappeared from public notice when the blunder of the English "War Correspondents" made its name immortal.

It was Sir E. Carson who first discovered to Irish Nationalists a new weapon which enabled them to dispense with debased Parliamentary methods. If in the North against the law of England, why not in the South to break the Hibernian despotism under which every generous aspiration of the Irish soul was perishing? The repercussion in the South of the revolt of the Privy Councillors of the North followed as quickly as the bullet follows the flash. How quickly is revealed in the *Secret History of the Irish Volunteers* from the pen of The O'Rahilly, who lost his life in the fighting of Easter Week. Sir E. Carson's Provisional Government was formed on September 24th, 1913. Little more than a month afterwards a dozen men meeting in Wynn's Hotel, Dublin, on the invitation of Professor Eoin MacNeill, took the first step to establish "the Irish Volunteers" (called after Grattan's Protestant patriots). So careful were the founders to avoid any suspicion of sectional or sectarian partisanship that "Arthur Griffith's name was deliberately not included, and only three of the twelve were then members of the *Sinn Féin* Party." "As we were all in agreement that the movement must be broadly National, and not confined to, or controlled by any particular Party," well known supporters of Mr. Redmond's Party, like the then Lord Mayor of Dublin (Ald. Sherlock) and Professor Kettle were among those first approached. But "refusals were the order of the day." Lord Mayor Sherlock bluntly



declined to join the Committee and Professor Kettle pleaded "indisposition," although later both were glad to take quite an active part in the movement. It was even made clear that the new force was not to be organised in any hostile spirit towards Sir E. Carson or his Ulster Volunteers, but on the contrary in the hope of their being both brought to co-operate in some National *rapprochement* worthy of the old Protestant patriots of the North. The Nationalist youth of the South rather admired Sir E. Carson's pluck, were indebted to him for his example and encouraged by his impunity. In his first expedition to Cork to recruit for the Irish Volunteers Professor MacNeill even went the length of calling for three cheers for the Ulster leader for the lesson he had taught them that what he conceived to be great principles were worth daring and dying for. So sublime a doctrine of unselfish patriotism however was so little to the taste of the Board of Erin Hibernians, whose narrow sectarian intolerance still held the field, that a local Molly leader headed a charge to clear the platform by brute force and fractured the head of the Chairman, Mr. J. J. Walsh (who was afterwards member for Cork and Postmaster General under the Dáil Eireann).

But nothing could now quench the longing of the youth of Ireland for some escape from the corrupt atmosphere of the Hibernian tyranny to a higher and more generous plane. The leaders were little known, the Party Press met them with a remorseless boycott, the Parliamentary Party were still the recipients of the vast American and Australian funds without which no considerable purchase of arms was possible. All was of no avail against the mysterious instincts that were beginning to stir in the soul of the nation. Then came the Parliamentarians' classic resource against any movement of opinion that did not bear their *imprimatur*—their determination either to control it



or to crush it. We have seen how, as under the incantations of some mediæval witch her own brat waxed and prospered while her foster child pined and wasted, the Board of Erin Hibernians secretly cast their spells over the United Irish League until its Branches, its offices and its funds became their own; how they organised and subsidised the disruption of the Land and Labour Association as soon as it refused to merge its existence in theirs<sup>1</sup>; how the modest claim of the All-for-Ireland League for a bare hearing for the doctrines which have since become the last hope of the nation was beaten down with bludgeons and revolver-shots. The Irish Volunteers were now to be similarly practised upon. The Parliamentary leaders developed a sudden enthusiasm for the movement that could no longer be merely snubbed. The O'Rahilly tells us the Volunteers "discovered that the Hibernians had received secret instructions to form themselves into Volunteer Companies, to affiliate with Headquarters and secure control of the movement in their districts, with a view to control the coming Convention and to swamp the original Volunteers." "All the insidious influences known to the politicians' art were immediately brought into play inside as well as outside the original Committee. The primrose path to place, power and profit was temptingly displayed to Eoin MacNeill and his associates, but it was in vain."

When all else failed, Mr. Redmond was induced to try a *coup d'état* which was the very definition of an odious tyranny. He fulminated a ukase, on the plea that the Provisional Committee "was not sufficiently representative," claiming the right to nominate twenty-five additional members of his own, and threatening if his arbitrary demand were disputed to start a rival Hibernian Committee to disrupt the

<sup>1</sup> See Captain D. D. Sheehan's *Ireland since Parnell*, Chapter XIV., for an interesting exposure of this transaction.



movement. And inasmuch as the secret Order had already flooded the Volunteers with bogus Hibernian Companies and the collapse of "the Home Rule Bill" was not yet sufficiently apparent to disturb the infatuation with which the country was still pathetically loyal to the watchword: "Trust Asquith," it was conceivable that Mr. Redmond might up to that time have been strong enough to make good his threat. The Original Committee submitted, and the twenty-five Hibernian nominees—including three priests of the Gospel of Peace who were prominent in the Hibernian Order—were admitted to the governing body, not, as it was soon evident enough, with any serious intent to form a military organisation but to emasculate it or turn it to Hibernian uses. It was a victory of the kind for which the Parliamentarians were soon to pay a heavy reckoning.

According to The O'Rahilly, who answered for his truthfulness with his life, the 25 Hibernian nominees were no sooner added than they proceeded to hand over supreme control to a Standing Committee of which they constituted themselves a majority, devoted their energies chiefly to keeping the Volunteers unarmed, and when arms were imported without their leave coolly ordered those who had paid for them to "loan" them to their own Hibernian nominees in Ulster. At the moment of the *Coup d'état*, two ships laden with arms were on the seas—*The White Yacht*, chartered by the Original Committee and *L'Avenir* of Antwerp, which set out with a cargo of arms purchased by Mr. Redmond. The *White Yacht* duly arrived at Howth and safely landed its rifles; *L'Avenir* for some mysterious reason abandoned any attempt to unload its cargo and put back to Belgium. The Standing Committee, now manned by the Hibernians, shut off all proposals to devote the American funds to the purchase of arms, carried on "a studied and well-sustained campaign to force the resignation of



MacNeill and other members of the Original Committee by attacks, accusations and insults which in the interests of Irish decency," The O'Rahilly refrains from detailing, and crowned their performances by issuing the audacious order: "Send all guns to Ulster"—the meaning of which was that the rifles imported and paid for before the Hibernian nominees were forced on the Committee were to be handed over to the Molly Lodges in Belfast at the derisory price of 25/- apiece.

It seems certain that it was these high handed and unscrupulous attempts to capture and debauch the Volunteer movement which finally alienated the young men of Ireland from the Parliamentary movement and made the Easter Week Rising of 1916 inevitable. Mr. Redmond's double-faced and vacillating attitude at the outbreak of the World-War, when he first proposed that the Volunteers should take armed possession of Ireland and next that they should recruit for the allied front in Flanders, completed the indignation aroused even in the worthiest of his own followers by the conspiracy to convert the Volunteers into a Party organisation of the Hibernians. The members of the Original Committee, who had never formally admitted the Parliamentary nominees as members, declined to summon them any further to their meetings, and proceeded frankly to arm and drill the Irish Volunteers to seize the first opportunity for an Insurrection. The expelled Parliamentarians formed a rival organisation of their own calling themselves "The National Volunteers." The country battalions in preponderating numbers had not yet relinquished their faith in Parliamentary methods and might never have relinquished it had Mr. Redmond only seized the opportunity that, as will be seen hereafter, was afforded to him of rallying Nationalists and Irish Unionists in a war-policy which would have been a Freedom of Ireland policy as well. The



trouble was that he never clearly understood what was to be his own function in the Volunteer movement, except to disarm it of any military significance and get its machinery into his own hands. He was still in a position to inspect vast reviews of "National Volunteers" with wooden guns and even guns that looked like genuine ones, but his double-meaning words left the fighting men cold and derision was added to all the other evidences of unreality when it was discovered that the arms which he had imported from Italy to supply his devout Hibernian Volunteers were ancient weapons of the Garibaldian raids upon the States of the Church, and that he had forgotten to order any ammunition for the venerable relics. All young and generous hearts, even in his own ranks, were turning from the squalid concerns of the politicians to the mystic voices from on high which were already whispering in the night winds.



## CHAPTER XIV

## THE OUTBREAK OF THE WAR

WHEN England, after more hesitation than is generally supposed, determined to throw in her fortunes with France as against Germany in August, 1914, three courses were open to Ireland, two of which had much to be said for them and the third which was wholly unwise. She might have held sternly aloof, in view of the unsettled condition in which her own affairs had been left, or she might have cordially joined the Allies in consideration of sufficient guarantees for the future of Home Rule, or she might follow the course which unfortunately Mr. Redmond did follow, of doing neither the one thing nor the other with firmness.

No apology was necessary to History, or in any other quarter, if Ireland took up the position that, having spent many almost humiliating years in petitioning for an honest peace with England, and having received nothing in return from a "Home Rule Government" except a miserable half-measure for three-fourths of the country on condition of the surrender of the other fourth, she would, in the spirit of "the Sacred Egoism of Nations" which moved every other party to the war, look to her own interests first of all, and abide events with the vigilant detachment which England so warmly admired and so magnificently rewarded in the case of Tcheko-Slovakia, Jugo-Slavia, Poland, The Trentino, Roumania and Greece. No thinking Irishman believed that England declared for war except under the conviction that it offered an opportunity which might never return of destroying the German trade which was beating her out of the



market and annihilating the German Fleet which might soon be more than her match upon the seas. The touch of sentimentality over Germany's brutality to little Belgium came in happily enough, but did not impose upon those who remembered England's no less coarse brutality to Belgium not many years before when it was a question of laying hands upon her African empire on the Congo. As for the sudden transports of enthusiasm for France, it did not escape notice that a few days before the declaration of war, Sir E. Grey had promised the Kaiser to remain neutral, if he would invade France by any other route except the Belgian one, and would undertake not to bombard the Northern ports of France, which were within cannonshot of Dover. Nor was the pathetic correspondence between President Poincaré and King George likely to be forgotten in which the President pleaded and pleaded in vain that the war might yet be averted if the Kaiser was given plainly to understand that he would have England arrayed against him. Whither or not it was the Ulster Rebellion or general debility that was to blame, England went on hesitating to the last minute of the last hour. All this is recalled to demonstrate the arrant cant of finding it a crime in Young Ireland not to flame up in a fever of enthusiasm for the war against the most formidable enemy of England.

It is nevertheless the truth that, at the outbreak of the war, the number of passionate pro-Germans, even among the young men, was inconceivably small. There was yet a chance—indeed the assurance of success—for the second course of a reasoned and conditioned participation by Ireland on the side of the Allies. In the judgment of my All-for-Ireland colleagues and myself, this was the course which best consorted with the highest interests of Ireland. When invited by Mr. Redmond's most influential supporter in the South—Mr. George Crosbie, owner of the *Cork*



*Examiner*—to define the lines on which united action by the nation in this sense could be secured, I drafted a Memorandum of which the chief articles were these :

1. That Mr. Redmond should take the initiative in inviting a Conference with representative Irish Unionists, some of the most influential of whom I was in a position to guarantee would act on his invitation.

2. I was willing either to attend such a Conference with him, or to abstain, as he might judge most useful.

3. Their abhorrence of Partition and the prospect of a united Irish contribution to the Army would be a sufficient inducement to obtain the concurrence of the overwhelming mass of the Irish Unionists in a broader Home Rule agreement (with due safeguards for minorities) to be then and there adopted by the Government as the price of Ireland's co-operation in the war.

4. Her contribution to be limited (according to Mr. Asquith's own estimate in Dublin) to an Irish Army Corps with reserves (say 60,000 men).

5. That force to be raised in county battalions (after due ratification of the Home Rule Settlement) by a joint recruiting campaign in which the Nationalist and Unionist leaders would speak from a common platform.

The scheme, it will be observed, made careful provision for the sensibilities of the Parliamentary majority and offered them, as it turned out, their last chance of recovering the leadership of the nation. The concurrence of the Unionists of three provinces and of the greater portion of the fourth was assured. That timid and slow-moving body, secretly all along in sympathy with the All-for-Ireland programme as they have since avowed, but intimidated from openly identifying themselves with it, would have joyfully declared for a Home Rule settlement that would at one and the same time deliver them from the terror



of Partition and satisfy their loyal zeal for the war. Such a combination in such an hour of fate could have dictated their own equitable terms to British Governments and Parties, and not least to Sir Edward Carson who was beginning to be alarmed by the sense of his own responsibility for precipitating the war.

On the Nationalist side, a firm and united policy might still have carried all before it. The dissensions between the Original Committee of the Irish Volunteers and the imported nominees of Mr. Redmond had not yet come to a head. They actually endorsed Mr. Redmond's pronouncement which the House of Commons hailed with transports as a war-speech. A meeting of all parties which my colleague Mr. Maurice Healy and myself summoned together in the Cork City Hall pronounced for the Allies without a dissentient voice. The ardent body of a few score young men who were all that *Sinn Féin* was at that time able to muster under its flag in Cork were present, and bitter as was the trial for them and for our no less fiery All-for-Ireland youth as well of hearing trusted Nationalist leaders exhort them to take the side of England in a quarrel however otherwise after their own hearts, they listened in respectful silence and were willing to concede that the unpalatable advice came at all events from men with whom the interests of Ireland were as sovereign a consideration as with themselves. It took the strong arm of England to restrain their fathers from rushing to the aid of France in the German Invasion of the *Année Terrible*. To take up arms in defence of the head of the Celtic nations now would be the most joyous of duties could it only be squared with their first duty to Ireland. The contribution we stipulated for would have demanded a far lesser sacrifice of Irish blood than was afterwards squandered on British battlefields, bringing no thanks—bringing, indeed, bitter calumny on the race—at the hands of England. The Irish Army



Corps, drawn from the best chivalry of a united nation, would have covered the Irish name with a glory second to that of no fighting race on all the battle front ; their achievements would have earned the undying gratitude of democratic Britain ; even at the worst—if Ireland's reward was still the old one of ingratitude and bad faith—they would have come home a disciplined and unconquerable army, fortified with the admiration and goodwill of all the honest world, in enforcing, by whatever means they might, the demand for the liberty the Allies were showering upon the most obscure of the small nationalities that had espoused their cause.

Once more, the right word had only to be spoken, and the nation would have followed. Once more it was the wrong word that was spoken and the wrong turn that was taken. Our proposals were forwarded to Mr. Redmond with the strong endorsement of his most powerful supporters in the South. His only answer was a pompous intimation, through his Secretary, that their communication would receive due attention. The proposals were, in matter of fact, never heard of more. Had Mr. Redmond any coherent plans of his own, his discourtesy would have been of less account. He had none. The war-speech in the House of Commons which made such a stir at the time was ludicrously misinterpreted in two opposite senses. The House of Commons, always unfathomably astray in Irish affairs, hailed it with raptures as an Irish Declaration of War against Germany, the Provisional Committee of the Irish Volunteers as a promise to take charge of Ireland on condition that the British Garrison should be withdrawn. The speech admitted of both meanings because definite meaning it had none. Here was the essential declaration revised by Mr. Redmond himself:<sup>1</sup>

“ I say to the Government that they may to-

<sup>1</sup> *Ireland and the War.* Extracts from speeches of J. E. Redmond, M.P. Dublin. 1915.



morrow withdraw every one of their troops from Ireland. I say that the coasts of Ireland will be defended from foreign invasion by her armed sons, and for this purpose armed Nationalist Catholics in the South will be only too glad to join arms with the armed Protestant Ulstermen in the North. . . . We offer to the Government of the day that they may take their troops away and that, if it is allowed to us, in comradeship with our brethren in the North, we will ourselves defend the coasts of our country."

The speech was probably unpremeditated, under the temptation to say something amiable in the *chaleur communicative* of the Declaration of War, and was assuredly not intended as a snare for England. The misfortune was that, in an hour for plainness of speech, it contained no definite policy at all. Probably nobody was more amazed than Mr. Redmond by the extravagant enthusiasm of his English listeners. He did not, in matter of fact, promise a single Irish recruit to the British Army, but only to "defend the coasts of Ireland" if the British Army abandoned the possession of the country to his Volunteers and Sir E. Carson's. "Defending the coasts of Ireland" was the favourite anti-recruiting locution at the moment. "Defending the coasts of Ireland" against whom? Not against the invasion of a German Fleet, from which the British Fleet alone could defend them. Mr. Redmond did not follow out the meaning of his words, but they were taken by the Irish Volunteers to mean the evacuation of the country by the British Army, and the taking of their places by the whole armed Nationalist manhood of the country, with no other use that could be conceived for their rifles except to try conclusions with the Carson Volunteers, should they prove recalcitrant. In his speech at a great Volunteer Review at Maryborough a fortnight later (August 16, 1914) there will not be found a word of exhortation to despatch a single Irish soldier on foreign service, but, on the



contrary, a renewal of the cry of "the defence of the shores of Ireland" as the one business of his Volunteers and a confident assurance that he had got a promise from the Prime Minister "to arm, equip and drill a large number of Irish Volunteers" for that explicit purpose, adding that the remainder of the Volunteers would be armed "with the rifles which my colleagues and I supply and the rifles which are being supplied from various other quarters."

He furthermore endeavoured to reassure the country by spreading the mischievous delusion that the safety of Home Rule was now beyond all peril or mischance. In the House of Commons on September 16, he referred with indignation to the ungenerous hint of the Leader of the Opposition that his war-speech of August 3, "was an offer of conditional loyalty." "It was nothing of the kind," he exclaimed and proceeded to show "the absurdity of his making it a condition that the Home Rule Bill should go on the Statute Book, because all through we had the certainty it was going on the Statute Book." He propped up this fallacy with a painful lack of candour

"I should like to say this, if the Prime Minister will allow me—that all through these negotiations, conversations and so on I have had with him—all through, on every occasion that I ever had any dealings with him about this matter, he has assured me that it was the intention of the Government to put this Bill on the Statute Book this session. From that he never wavered, and it would have been an utter absurdity for me to have made the putting of the Bill on the Statute Book under these circumstances a condition with reference to my offer of the Irish Volunteers."

The fallacy, of course, was that the Government had indeed promised to "put the Bill on the Statute Book," but only on the condition, agreed to by Mr. Redmond and his colleagues, that it was to be accom-



panied by an Amending Bill to be "put on the Statute Book" simultaneously, severing six counties from Ireland and over a million of her population and placing them under the sway of Sir E. Carson. The Irish leader conceals the fact that this was the upshot of all his "negotiations and conversations and dealings with the Prime Minister about this matter," and asks his countrymen to believe that the farce of "putting on the Statute Book" this barren and abortive Bill was so complete a triumph for Home Rule that any further bargaining or conditioning on the part of the representatives of Ireland would be "an absurdity."

The two objects of our All-for-Ireland proposals—the achievement of a great National Settlement under pressure of the war emergency, and a real, although limited, Irish contribution to the armies of the Allies as the price of it—were thus completely frustrated and the country left leaderless and bewildered even as to what their titular leader intended them to do. Matters changed not for the better but for the worse as Mr. Redmond felt himself impelled to live up to the unexpected fame of his absurdly misunderstood war-speech of August 3. But it was not until September 21, in a speech at Woodenbridge, he for the first time made a clear enunciation of a "twofold duty" of Ireland for service abroad as well as at home:

"The duty of the manhood of Ireland is twofold. Its duty is, at all costs, to defend the shores of Ireland against foreign invasion. It is a duty more than that of taking care that Irish valour proves itself on the field of war as it has always proved itself in the past. . . . It would be a disgrace for ever to our country and a reproach to her manhood if young Ireland confined their efforts to remaining at home to defend the shores of Ireland from an unlikely invasion, and shrank from the duty of proving on the field of battle that gallantry and courage which has distinguished your race all through its history."



The Original Volunteers, who had understood his war-speech as a demand for the evacuation of the country by the British Army and its surrender to the custody of an armed Ireland, were thunderstruck by the proclamation at Woodenbridge of the "twofold duty" which they construed to mean recruiting in England's service, without any stipulation for the future of the Irish Cause, and they straightaway took steps to separate themselves from such a programme. They shook off the tyrannous hold the Parliamentarians had established upon an organisation they did not believe in, by the simple method of no longer inviting Mr. Redmond's nominees to their councils. Numerically their own ranks were still scanty, and for a time the Parliamentarians still enjoyed an apparent preponderance of men as well as a monopoly of funds in their rival organisation which they called the "National Volunteers." Mr. Redmond was so deceived by his usual misjudgment of Irish feeling, as to take the line, very unusual with him, of directing the coarsest abuse against the young men who had defeated his treacherous attempt to lay hold of their organisation:

"These men are not and never were Home Rulers. They may be or they may think they are revolutionists, or separatists, or international socialists, or they may be common or garden cranks, but you and I know they are not and never were Home Rulers. . . . When this terrible war is over, then I say the puny cavillers and cranks of to-day will again scamper away to their burrows and they will be forgotten in the universal rejoicing of a nation emancipated in spite of them." (Tuam, December 16).

The "twofold duty" was preached with a two-fold voice during the winter, the recruiting exhortations being mostly reserved for elderly citizens in-doors, while the battalions of armed Volunteers outside were regaled with the glories of home service. But it was not long before he came to recognise that the discontent



in his own ranks was deepening and widening. The sense of incompetence and shiftiness at headquarters was only confirmed for thinking men by his repeated assurances that "England has granted the autonomy for which we have been asking for a hundred years" (Kilkenny, October 19), and that the only thing wanting to their triumph was that "it would not be possible to summon our new Parliament while this war is raging"—assurances which in the mouth of the leader who knew that with his own consent the only "autonomy" granted by England was the destruction of Ireland as a national unit, and that, war or no war, a Parliament for all Ireland would never be assembled under the Statute of which he boasted, were falsehoods in substance and in fact. The growing conviction that the Irish leaders had been jockeyed and the country betrayed deprived the reviews of the "National" Volunteers, which were still large and showy, of all real meaning, and the recruiting for General Parsons' Division (whose misnomer, "the Irish Brigade" was one of the bizarre humours of its fate) gradually fell away, outside the Belfast neighbourhood where the Board of Erin Hibernians had still power enough to sustain Mr. Devlin in his perfectly genuine endeavour to beat up recruits.

It became the fashion to father the failure of recruiting for "the Irish Brigade" upon the arrogance and anti-Irish bias of Kitchener's War Office. But it was not the Hibernian leaders who should have been the readiest to complain of arrogance and ignorance at the War Office. The War Office appointed as the heads of the 10th and 16th Divisions Irish generals of sympathy and distinction, Gen. Parsons (and succeeding him Gen. Hickie) and Sir Bryan Mahon; they invited Mr. Devlin to review, both at Fermoy and at Aldershot, General Parsons' Division, to which he had unquestionably contributed a substantial contingent from Belfast, and made no



objection while the Hibernian soldiers on parade received their leader with cheers and shouts of "Up, the Mollies!" although they ran the danger of much more numerous soldiers from the South responding with counter-cries not to the liking of "The Mollies." War Office rifles were even furnished to a body of Mr. Redmond's "National" Volunteers in Cork, who were for some time entrusted with the guardianship of the bridges in their gay uniforms (for the wearing of which, by the way, young men were a few years afterwards sentenced to terms of penal servitude). The failure of "The Irish Brigade" was due, not to the War Office, nor, as I am still persuaded, to the people, but to the vacillations and half-heartedness of their leaders. The thousands of gallant Irishmen who went to the front and died at the front, in the faith that they were dying for Ireland, were allowed to make their sacrifice in vain; the five hundred thousand men of Irish blood who fought in the armies of America, Canada, and Australia, as well as of Britain, were lost in scattered groups, whose valour brought small reward to the land of their fathers; even the best of the "National" Volunteers began to waste away back into the ranks of the original Irish Volunteers, sick of the politicians' tricks by which the country was being cajoled. It was all over with any war policy that could have brought "constitutional" redress to Ireland.

On the other hand, Sir E. Carson, on the brink of destruction in the eyes of England as one of the chief authors of the war, extricated himself with consummate tact from his dilemma, While the Hibernian leaders were spurning the offer of united action with their countrymen and incapable of initiating any coherent action of their own, Sir E. Carson drafted his contingent Ulster rebels of a few months before into an autonomous Ulster Division,



and by their hereditary Orange war-cries as they crossed the Somme on their famous 1st of July and by the rest of their distinctive and well-advertised exploits more truly won the heart of England in their incomparably smaller numbers than the half-a-million of Nationalists of Irish breed whose blood watered the battlefields of Flanders and Gallipoli to no avail.



## CHAPTER XV

THE EASTER WEEK REBELLION  
(1916)

As I was entering the House of Commons on Easter Monday afternoon, the door keeper informed me that Dublin was in rebellion and that the Castle had been attacked. Men with eyes to see had long realised that an explosion was coming. The young generation in Ireland was chafing in sullen silence against the inefficiency and degeneracy of the Parliamentary movement; Carson's preparations for rebellion had only to be imitated to supply the means for a revolt, and England's war difficulties suggested the irresistible temptation. Among the younger men of our own movement there had been springing up a hopeless feeling that conciliatory methods, however honest and indeed by reason of their honesty, could be of no avail against the corrupt tyranny of the Board of Erin and the cajolery, if not perfidy, of English politicians. They were already beginning, like the rest, to get their guns and join in the route marches of the Original Volunteers. But so little was I prepared for the thunderbolt that so suddenly rent the sky, that I had been spending the short recess peacefully on the sands at Brighton and returned to London to find that the venue of rebellion had changed from Carson's Belfast to the Irish capital and had within a few hours struck with paralysis the trembling officials of England and their Hibernian advisers.

That the cataclysm <sup>which followed</sup> should have come with no less surprise upon the responsible rulers of the country, with their innumerable sources of information, is more



astonishing, but the Report and blue-book of evidence taken before Lord Hardinge's Royal Commission relating to the outbreak leaves no room for doubt that this was so. The evidence demonstrates that the government of the country was for all practical purposes in the hands of Mr. Birrell and Mr. Dillon, and they could think of no more masterly way of meeting what was coming than in the words of the Prime Minister to "wait and see." The Lord Lieutenant (Lord Wimborne), indeed, had some not very original strategic plans for making a swoop on the leaders, but, when he was overborne by the cheery Mr. Birrell and his Friar Joseph, he exhibited so little foresight of the immediacy of the crisis, that he allowed his Commander-in-Chief to depart for a holiday in England, and saw no objection to the officers of the Dublin Castle garrison going off to the Fairy House Races on the day of the Rising, and went himself and his Under Secretary within an ace of being made inglorious prisoners when the rebels knocked at the gate of Dublin Castle which like the Viceregal Lodge was at the moment defended only by "a corporal's guard." His Chief Secretary had not been in Ireland since February and then only for ten days.

There is one part of the official evidence which would seem to throw upon unfortunate Mr. Redmond some of the blame for the inaction at Dublin Castle. He, in conformity with a now inveterate habit, had withdrawn himself from the region of responsibilities and delegated his authority to Mr. Dillon who, it would seem in his turn, sheltered himself from responsibility by pointing to Mr. Redmond's failure to identify himself with his own strong counsels against the rebels. The following extract from a letter under date 18th December, 1915, written by the Under Secretary to the Chief Secretary is published in the Report of Lord Hardinge and his colleagues :



“What is Redmond up to with his comparisons between Ireland and Great Britain in the matter of police and crime? He knows, or should know, *after what Dillon wrote to him over a month ago in the enclosed ‘Confidential letter’ and repeated verbally on the 3rd instant* that the present situation in Ireland is most serious and menacing. Redmond himself sent me the other ‘private’ enclosure on the 9th.”

It is to be observed that of this letter of Sir Mathew Nathan which was published for the first time in Lord Hardinge’s Report dated June 26th, there is no mention in the printed evidence of Sir Mathew himself given on May 18th nor of Mr. Birrell given on May 19th. The remarkable letters referred to from Mr. Dillon to Mr. Redmond, and from Mr. Redmond to Sir M. Nathan must have been in the possession of the Chief Secretary or of the Under Secretary and must have been produced and read during their examination. All reference to them, however, is suppressed in the official Minutes of their evidence, and the facts would never have reached the light had not the Commissioners themselves decided to divulge them in their Report. Mr. Dillon, who might presumably have been concerned to explain his part in these transactions, did not present himself as a witness, and the Commissioners who attached much importance to his action in their Report, do not seem to have pressed him to give evidence before them. Mr. Birrell’s own account of the difference between the two Irish leaders was this :

“Mr. Redmond always took the view that the Sinn Féiners were negligible and he was good enough to say so in the House of Commons on a particular occasion. . . . Mr. Dillon was very strongly the other way, not in the sense of taking action, but very strongly of opinion that the Sinn Féiners, particularly the Sinn Féin movement and the insurrectionary movement in Dublin was a danger, and on that point there was a



very friendly but strong difference of opinion between the two.

“ Was Mr. Dillon equally in favour of non-intervention ?—Yes.

“ He thought it dangerous and yet he was against intervention ?—*He was against it in the absence of proof of hostile association with the enemy. If there had been evidence of hostile association with the enemy which you could prove, particularly against an individual, he naturally would have been in favour of a prosecution.*”

The Irish people will have to await future researches in the archives of Dublin Castle to discover the text of the letters which would have explained the nature of the “ very friendly but strong difference of opinion ” between Mr. Dillon and Mr. Redmond in their advice to the Castle authorities in this crisis. For the present we must be content to know that these letters were for some unexplained reason deleted from the Minutes of Evidence before the Hardinge Commission, and that in the main the “ difference between the two ” was that Mr. Redmond wrapped himself up in an optimistic haze, while Mr. Dillon only awaited in order to advise immediate action against the rebels that “ proof of hostile association with the enemy ” which, it is elsewhere mentioned, the landing of Sir Roger Casement in Kerry supplied. And that it was Mr. Dillon and his coadjutor the “ National President ” of the Board of Erin who really mattered, is obvious enough from this illuminating passage in the evidence of Sir Mathew Nathan :

“ Sir MacKenzie Chalmers—The three people upon whom you relied for information—?—Not for information.

“ I mean about the feeling of the country—the three people upon whom you relied were Mr. Devlin, Mr. Dillon and Mr. Redmond ? Yes ; *I saw Mr. Redmond comparatively few times.*

“ Twice, I think, in your Memorandum you used



the words 'the Irish Parliamentary Party.' Practically that meant those three gentlemen?—Yes."<sup>1</sup>

There is some pathos in the protestation with which the Viceroy began his evidence that in the Dublin Castle scheme of government, the King's Viceroy is not really of any account, but the rest of his narrative of the Rising would read like so much pure comic opera, only that it was so heavily splashed with blood. The Admiral at Queenstown in the course of a chat with the local General on April 16th, mentioned casually that the Casement cargo of arms had left Germany on the 12th, accompanied by two German submarines, and that a Rising was timed for Easter Eve. It was not until April 18th the chat reached the Viceroy, who wrote off to the Chief Secretary (in London), "a little colloquially, I am afraid," rejoicing in "the stroke of luck" by which "our friend" (Sir Roger Casement) was captured on landing, hoping "there would be no nonsense about clemency in making an example of him," developing a grandiose plan of his own for a swoop on the Dublin suspects, and imploring Mr. Birrell (Mr. Birrell of all

<sup>1</sup> Another passage from Sir Mathew's evidence is worth reproducing :

"Whom could you consult when the Chief Secretary was away?—The Irish Members of Parliament are frequently conferred with. . . . I must state one thing that fell to Mr. Birrell to do when he was over here (in Westminster) was to see the Irish Members of Parliament, *who were constantly going to him on every conceivable subject.*

"Is that Mr. Redmond's Party or Mr. O'Brien's?—No. I am talking entirely of the Party under Mr. Redmond."

For the high affairs of State, the three above enumerated were "The Irish Parliamentary Party," but the rest of the Party had their compensations by (in Mr. T. P. O'Connor's indignant phrase) "making a commonage" of the Chief Secretary's room in the House of Commons, oblivious of their public vow not to seek Government patronage, which it is certain covered three-fourths of the communications on "every conceivable subject" with which they were "constantly" entertaining Mr. Birrell.



men!) "if you agree, do write and ginger Nathan." Nathan remained so ungingered that, on the morning of the Rising, "I urged that the Castle guard be strengthened, but the Under Secretary demurred," and Lord Wimborne himself, having in vain offered "to take full responsibility for any possible illegality" in "making a bag" of six or seven hundred Dublin Volunteers the previous night<sup>1</sup> was at 10-30 a.m. on Easter Monday morning entirely reassured, "especially in view of the obvious disorganisation of the insurgents' plans that the Rising timed for this day would not take place." Nathan went off to the Castle to get the Chief Secretary on the wires, and the Lord Lieutenant who remained at the Viceregal Lodge "had completed a letter to the Chief Secretary and was in the act of writing to the Prime Minister deploring the delay and hoping that no mischief would occur in the meantime when at 12-30 a telephone message from the police announced that the Castle had been attacked, the Post Office seized, Stephen's Green occupied, the Ashtown Railway Bridge destroyed, and that the insurgents were marching on the Viceregal Lodge." So "obvious" was "the disorganisation of the insurgents' plans" that within twenty minutes after the stroke of noon their columns had taken possession of Dublin at six different strategic centres, and poor Lord Wimborne spent "the same afternoon" writing another despatch to the Chief Secretary announcing "the worst had happened just when we thought it averted. The Post Office is seized—Nathan still besieged in the Castle, but I hope he will be soon out. Almost all wires cut. Bridges blown up. Everybody away on holiday." One expects the message to wind up with a comic war-song from Offenbach's

<sup>1</sup> "It was found impossible to have done it for that night," he adds, with feeling. It is a curious fact that none of the official extracts quoted in this Chapter were ever made public in the Irish Press.



*Grand Duchess.* For a last excruciating touch of humour hear this :

“ What troops had you in the Viceregal Lodge on Easter Monday ?—Ten men.

“ A corporal’s guard ?—A corporal’s guard.

“ And in the Castle ?—I do not know ; I suppose a corporal’s guard—not more.

“ When they shot the policeman there was nothing to prevent them going on, of course ?—They could walk right in, of course.”

*General Boum* could not have made a more masterly disposition of his forces.

The Parliamentary Party failed as did we all to foresee the Rising of Easter Week, but they failed more inexcusably to foresee its consequences. The first few days’ news from Dublin reduced them to a state of decent silence and indeed terror in the House of Commons, but as it became more and more evident that the insurrection was being crushed by Sir John Maxwell and the considerable army assembled for the recapture of Dublin and was not extending to the country, “ the Party ” rushed to the opposite extreme of confidence, and began to regard the Rising with scarcely disguised satisfaction as marking their deliverance from a vague danger which had long weighed upon their spirits. The effervescence among the young men, which Mr. Redmond’s attempt to capture the Volunteers had only inflamed, had at last come to a head, and had been (so the Parliamentary wise men began to calculate) disposed of for another generation by the fiasco of Easter Week and the remorseless executions that followed it. Mr. Laurence Ginnell charged that the Prime Minister’s announcement that the first batch of the insurgent leaders had been shot in Kilmainham Jail was hailed with cheers from the Irish benches. His memory had doubtless been confused by the recollection of numerous only less painful demonstrations from the same quarter. In



accusing them of that particular enormity he was undoubtedly mistaken and I felt bound, for the sake of truth and of human nature, to attest that the announcement had been received with solemn silence in every part of the House. Characteristically the Board of *Erin* newspapers which had for years either suppressed or garbled everything else I said or wrote, published and republished my words with an eager emphasis which Mr. Ginnell might well quote as proof that it was I, and not he, who was mistaken. But I added in a passage which the same newspapers carefully deleted, a number of instances during those same tragic days, when the *Hibernian* members acted with all but equal indecency in cheering wildly every Ministerial announcement of victory for the British arms and blurting out their own contempt for their defeated countrymen and their exultation in what they believed to be their final riddance of "the factionists" of physical force.

Mr. Redmond sinned with the general ruck, although with more decorum. While the lives of the insurgent leaders were still trembling in the balance, there occurred a revolting scene in the House of Commons. The Prime Minister having announced, as the day's news from Dublin: "The rebels continue to hold some important public buildings in Dublin, and there is still fighting in the streets," Sir E. Carson rose to say: "I will gladly join with the Hon. and learned Member for Waterford in everything that can be done to denounce and put down those rebels now and for ever more." Mr. Redmond, speaking in an atmosphere quivering with English prejudice and passion, made this inconceivable response: "Will the House allow me to say just one sentence? I really think it is scarcely necessary to give expression, on behalf of all my colleagues of the Nationalist Party, to the feeling of detestation and horror with which we have regarded these proceedings," expressly adding



that he "joined most cordially with the right Hon. and learned Gentleman, the Member for Dublin University, "in advice which a less impudent arch rebel than he might well have tendered in a coat of sack-cloth and with a head strewn with ashes.

Who except Mr. Redmond could have tolerated Sir E. Carson complaining of sedition and at such an hour? To regret and dissociate himself from the rebellion was one thing, and a thing well within his right; to do so by treating as some monstrous crime a dash for liberty, however temerarious, by young Irish enthusiasts of indisputable chivalry and purity of motive, was another and an unnatural thing. To pretend that in doing so he was saving Home Rule was to contradict the notorious truth, which was that Home Rule was lost already and by his Party's double-dyed acceptance of Partition, and, as it turned out, was only to be resuscitated by the inspired madness of the young fellows who rescued it from the hands of the politicians. Above all, every honest Irish instinct was revolted by the spectacle of a Nationalist leader closing with the audacious invitation to "join hands in denouncing and putting down these rebels now and for evermore" coming from the man who not many months before had his hands red with the preparations for a rebellion against the King's law more extensive and bloody and incomparably more sordid than that of Easter Week. Respect for the British anxieties of the moment might properly have restrained him from the recriminations which the hypocrisy of the ringleader of the Ulster rebellion would have richly merited; but not only to refrain from a chiding word but to make common cause with—even to outstrip—the arch rebel of the North in trampling into the mire the gallant young Nationalists who had only copied his example, showed a perversity of judgment, a callousness to the spiritual pleadings of the Irish soul, which once for all made Mr. Redmond impossible as the National Leader.



His Party, nevertheless, proved themselves equally perverse in cheering his denunciation of the prostrate rebels. They cheered again when the Prime Minister announced that the "National" (i.e., Board of Erin) Volunteers in Drogheda had proffered their services to the police against the insurgents, and cheered more loudly still when the Prime Minister delivered an eulogium of the least reputable of all their colleagues who boasted that he had stolen the rifles of the insurgents on the night of the meditated rising in the County Limerick and then made his escape to the House of Commons to enjoy his blushing honours. They were to give a still more striking proof of their alienation from honest Irish sentiment. Mr. Birrell had just returned from Dublin and handed in his resignation. This time distressingly serious and with irrepressible tears in his eyes, he made a moving description of his feelings as he "stood amongst the smoking ruins of Dublin and surrounded with my own ruins in mind and thought" and had the sympathy of a House melted by his eloquence and by his fate. He by ill chance proceeded to give a new reminder of his irremediable incapacity to understand Irish feeling by hazarding a remarkable prediction: "The unanimity of Ireland has as I say even yet been preserved. This is no Irish rebellion. I hope that, although put down, as it is being put down, as it must be put down, with such success and with such courage and yet at the same time humanity toward the dupes, the rank and file, led astray by their leaders, that this insurrection in Ireland will never, even in the minds and memories of that people, be associated with their past rebellions or become an historical landmark in their history."

A coarse chorus of assent boomed from the Hibernian benches. They could not have given more offence to Ireland's most sacred traditions if they had cursed the memory of Robert Emmet, the hero of a curiously similar insurrection outside the walls of



Dublin Castle. If it be true that Success is the goddess of an Englishman, Failure, in the patriotic sphere, is no less truly an object of Irish worship. Our history for ages is the history of heroic failure, pitted for ever against odds to which it was no shame to succumb, and condemned fatally to terminate in the prison or on the scaffold, in broken hearts and calumniated names. If Ireland has no other reward to offer, she has at least a lavish love in which to enshrine her beaten soldiers, and if her young conscripts of Easter Week had done nothing more memorable than to give up their lives in what the Prime Minister of England was among the most generous to acknowledge to be a clean and gallant fight for a fine ideal, the more hopeless was their fight, the less willingly Ireland would forgive any aspersion on their memory.

But as a matter of fact the Easter Week Insurrection was something more than an obscure deed of desperation. It was, even if it stood by itself, an amazing military success. A body of enthusiasts having according to the official calculation only 825 rifles at their command succeeded in taking possession of the seat of Government within a single hour and holding possession of it for five days against a trained army of 20,000 men at the least, while the fairest quarter of Dublin was being tumbled about their ears in a bombardment whose every shell shock (in the words of Mr. Healy who witnessed it) "sounded like the thud of clay falling upon his father's coffin." The one flaw in their plans was the unaccountable failure to capture Dublin Castle. It might have been the easiest part of their enterprise. We have already seen that the Castle was only defended by a "corporal's guard" and that, according to the evidence of the Lord Lieutenant, as soon as the small party of rebels shot the policeman at the gate of the Lower Castle Yard, "there was nothing to prevent them



from going right in, of course." This view is shared entirely by Major Price, the Director of Military Intelligence, who "was talking to Sir Mathew Nathan in his office not 25 yards from the gate when the firing commenced." When asked "why they did not go on?" his reply is: "They could have done it as easily as possible. Twenty-five determined men could have done it." The evidence seems to be that, not even twenty-five, but only "half a dozen Volunteers in green coats" were available, probably owing to the poverty of men as well as rifles—still more likely because great as was the contempt of the insurgent leaders for the ruling powers, they refused to give credence to the unimaginable state of unpreparedness now disclosed in evidence. But it is certain that if half the number of men detailed to seize the Post Office or the Four Courts or to entrench themselves in Stephen's Green had been devoted to the supreme enterprise of capturing the citadel of English power, Dublin Castle and the Viceregal Lodge, with the Lord Lieutenant and the Under Secretary, must have fallen an easy prey to their arms and a victory so resounding must have been followed by an uprising in the country of which nobody could measure the extent or the duration. Verily it was only an ingenuous Mr. Birrell and an Irish Party in the last stages of decadence who could have fallen into the mistake of taking it for granted that their sneers at the beaten rebels would be re-echoed by the Irish nation. Any Irish schoolboy could have taught them that an adventure so glowing with romantic daring, and crowned with the halo of so many unflinching deaths in front of the firing-platoons of England, would be remembered with pride and tenderness as one of the most inspiring episodes of our history.

They believed they were dealing with a trumpery Dublin commotion and were confident they had heard the last of it once the abscess was lanced by Sir John



Maxwell. Both as to the facts and as to the prophecy, they were ludicrously astray. The insurrection was planned on the calculation that Reserve Lieutenant Von Spindler, the German Commander of the *Aud* would succeed in landing his cargo of 30,000 rifles and field guns on the coast of Kerry. He did pass safely through the lines of a great British fleet on the north coast of Scotland and arrived in Tralee Bay on the appointed day, and but for the absurd accident by which the motor-car conveying those who were to signal to him fell into the sea in the darkness, he would doubtless have put his guns successfully on shore. Had he done so, it is now known there was an abundance of men in every county of the South ready and panting to take them up, and an insurrection must have followed which it would have taken England many months to cope with, could she even have mustered the great army that would be required for the purpose in the crisis of her fate in Flanders. It is not so generally known that even the capture of Casement and the voluntary sinking of the shipful of German rifles would not have prevented an insurrection upon a vaster scale than the Dublin one, had not Professor Eoin MacNeill, the Commander of the Volunteers, countermanded the order before the news could penetrate anywhere outside the neighbourhood of Dublin, that his order had been in turn set aside (only, it is believed, by a single vote) by the Dublin Executive. Information not to be doubted came into my own possession that on the appointed night many thousands of insurgents from every part of Cork City and County converged upon the different mountain passes for the march into Kerry, and were only dispersed after scenes of angry remonstrance on the arrival of a messenger from Dublin, who urged in vain that the loss of the German armaments had put an end to all possibility of success. For many months the abject failure of the Parliamentary politicians had



been preparing hundreds of thousands of young Irishmen of high spirit for any chance, however desperate, of retrieving the honour of their nation in the fair ranks of war, and the evidence before the Hardinge Commission leaves no room for doubt that by a natural reaction, the young men seduced by the intrigues of the Board of Erin into Mr. Redmond's "National" Volunteers were going over in thousands, with their arms, to the side of the genuine fighters. One of the favourite excuses of "the Party" for the country turning to the side of the rebels was that they were horrified by the barbarities with which Sir John Maxwell put the Rising down. It was a misappreciation of Irish feeling as false as the rest. "The country" were, indeed, horrified by the twenty-one shootings in cold blood in Kilmainham Prison, but it was not so much that they pitied the young idealists as they admired and envied them, and they attributed their fate, not so much to the English militarists, as to the laches and incompetence of "the Party" and its leaders. For the young Republicans of the Original Volunteers, of course, Parliamentarianism in any shape was the enemy. But they knew themselves to be and would have remained a minority of no great dimensions, had not the mind of the country far and near been seething long with distrust of the Parliamentary politicians, and that not, as "the Party" fatuously tried to persuade themselves because the War Office had been uncivil in their dealings with Irish recruits, or even because of the Kilmainham fusillades, but for very much deeper reasons. Even the older men—"the sane and moderate elements," as they came to be nicknamed—although, until the astounding revelations that were to come later of the possibilities of guerilla warfare, they still believed armed rebellion to be stark madness, were already filled with disaffection to a Parliamentary Party steeped to the lips in a partly corrupt and wholly disgraceful



bargain for Partition, and felt their pulses throb at the gallantry and unselfishness of the insurrection which, according to Mr. Birrell and his Hibernians, was only to be remembered with execration by the Irish Nation.

The wise men in Westminster persised in their faith that the whole affair was a Dublin bubble and that the bubble was burst. For a moment they were disillusioned by the arrival of Mr. Dillon from Dublin, where he had been besieged in his house in North George's St. under the protection of a party of military. He burst into the House of Commons in a state of intense febrile excitement, and under the scandalised eye of Mr. Redmond, delivered a panegyric of the Dublin insurgents even more extravagant than had been his abuse and ridicule before the Rising. As we have seen, there had been "strong differences of opinion" between him and his titular leader, when there was question of "gingering Nathan." and when even the gentle Nathan asked: "What is Redmond up to, after what Dillon wrote to him over a month ago in the enclosed" (still unpublished) "'Confidential' letter to him?" The "strong differences" this time took an exactly opposite turn. While Mr. Redmond thought the occasion demanded "on behalf of all my colleagues" an expression of his and their "detestation and horror" of the rebellion, his nominal lieutenant, fresh from Dublin, broke into a passionate pæan to the glory of the rebels which, it may truly be said, did more to wound the feelings of the British House of Commons than all the frank hostility of the insurrection. Nor were his denunciations in high falsetto of the military altogether deprived of their sting by the absurd anti-climax at which he arrived when he complained that his son had been insulted by some subordinate officer who did not express himself in terms of proper respect for the name of Dillon, and with arm upraised registered the vow: "No son of mine shall ever enter the English Army."



This, however, was but an excited moment of panic on the part of a man who had to do something to make Dublin habitable for him ever again. He, like the rest of "the Party," soon fell back into Mr. Birrell's comfortable infatuation that the "unanimity of Ireland has even yet been preserved"—and preserved, of course, in support of the Board of Erin. Before long they had every Corporation and County Council filled with Hibernian nominees passing "unanimous" resolutions expressing the country's "detestation and horror" of the wicked rebels—resolutions which, before many months were over, the Boards that passed them wiped out from their books with penitential tears in the hope of absolution from their electorate. The rebels were being court-martialled or deported in their thousands, the last of their newspapers were extinguished, and the country-laid prostrate in a silence that seemed to be the brother of death. The reign of the Board of Erin was apparently so completely re-established that we had the farseeing Mr. Dillon assuring any Republicans who still ventured to show their heads that "the War Office paid no more attention to their antics than to the hopping of as many fleas."



## CHAPTER XVI

“AN IRISH PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT.”

MR. ASQUITH met the Easter Week crisis with a “gesture” which, had he persisted, might, even at the half-past eleventh hour, have saved Home Rule and himself. He went across to Ireland in person, visited the rebels in their prisons—it was even made a high crime that he shook hands with some of them—learned things that were not likely to be divulged in evidence before Lord Hardinge’s Commission and returned with the conviction that England was not dealing with a gang of criminals, but with the best youth of a nation—that it was not Dublin Castle or Sir John Maxwell’s firing-platoons that had won the day—that, on the contrary, it was “Dublin Castle” that was doomed by God and man to disappear, and it was militarist terrorism that must disarm before the more unconquerable spirit of Liberty. Hearts the most lacerated by recent events could not be impervious to the soothing influence of the pilgrimage of an English Prime Minister who came to Ireland not to insult the memory of Pearse and his brother martyrs, or to traduce their motives, but to do justice to their romantic adventure, to confess that their fight had been “a clean one,” and to solicit advice by what great measures of conciliation he could best prove that they had not died in vain. Furthermore, on the morrow of an abortive insurrection savagely put down, and with the knowledge of the futility of expecting any further military aid from Germany,<sup>1</sup> the great mass

<sup>1</sup> Sir Roger Casement was bitter in his complaints of the neglect and contempt which met him on every hand in Berlin. Compare Mr. Ronald McNeill’s account of the sympathetic experiences of the emissary of the Ulster Covenanters, <sup>2</sup>Mr. Crawford, in Hamburg and in the Kiel Canal.



of the population might, nobody then doubted, be still weaned from counsels of violence by some practical demonstration that Parliamentary methods were not wholly vain nor English promises always perfidious. A deputation from the All-for-Ireland League who waited on Mr. Asquith in Cork—headed by Captain Sheehan, M.P., whose credentials were his own services in the Munster Fusiliers, and the lives of two of his gallant sons buried on the fields of Flanders—gave the Prime Minister in a sentence the programme which even at that dark hour might have spelled salvation for the two countries. It was—"Any price for a United Ireland, but Partition—never under any possible circumstances!"

A statesman of the Gladstone stature, returning to London with such convictions, would not have rested a day nor relaxed a muscle before giving them practical effect. Mr. Asquith's incurable defect was not want of courage or of constructive capacity, but a genial indolence which was growing upon him as his unexpected passion for human companionship expanded. There is no evidence that he personally went a step further upon the road he had opened up in Ireland. He made the *gran rifiuto* and handed over his Irish task and with it his own future to the ready hands of Mr Lloyd George. Weighed though the latter was with a thousand feverish cares as Minister for Munitions, his dauntless spirit did not hesitate to accept the inheritance bequeathed to him by his unsuspecting chief. His ignorance of Irish affairs was fathomless as the ocean—so fathomless that, as will be seen in a moment, he was unaware that Mr. Redmond had ever said: "There is no longer an Ulster Difficulty," and had never heard that Mr. Devlin's B.O.E. Hibernians were an exclusively Catholic Order. His genius lay in first making daring imaginative proposals and afterwards thinking out how the facts might fit in with them, or might be brutally



ignored if they did not. That is not to say that he was consciously heartless or unscrupulous. I think he was always cloudily sensible of the beauty of the Irish cause, both for ethnic reasons, which enabled him to see Celtic visions beyond the Irish seas as well as amidst his own haunted Welsh mountains, and also because Ireland in the House of Commons had shown him the pattern of glorious hardihood which he was himself to copy and improve upon for the upliftment of his Welsh brethren in the House of Commons, up to his day an ineffectual bilingual folk. Even his ignorance might have had its advantages, since it saved him from any inveterate prejudices in affairs so surcharged with prejudice as those of Ireland. It will always be debatable whether if he had accepted the Chief Secretaryship and devoted to it the prodigious energies—the matchless dynamic power of “push and go”—which enabled him to turn the munitionless *débâcle* of Mons into the breaking of the Hindenburg line, he might not have succeeded, where Mr. Asquith with his majority of 98 and a sterilised House of Lords had failed through loss of nerve or a too easy temper.

The misfortune was that in his eyes an Irish settlement was only a residual product of the tremendous Imperial munition manufacture he was engaged in. Everything had to be viewed from the standpoint of the world-war, and of how America was to be brought in. Whatever sentiment, Irish or Ulsterite, blocked the way had to be coaxed, and if not coaxable, to be crushed, untroubled by the nice questions of schoolgirls as to right or wrong, with something of the condescension of one of the great ones of the earth accustomed to play with lions as with lambs, and the self-righteousness of one whose aim was to set up the horn of his nation—and no doubt, in some modest degree, his own. Mr. Lloyd George was sagacious enough to see all the advantages of having the solution of the Irish problem, and with it of the war at one of its most critical



moments, transferred to his own hands, but he had no notion of allowing his ambitions to be circumscribed within the dingy limits of the Irish Office. As will be seen, he seems at first to have toyed with the temptation of accepting the Chief Secretaryship, but he lost little time in contradicting the rumour in the newspapers that he had stooped so far to conquer. He had only consented to be the *Deus ex machina* whose bare appearance with his enchanted wand was to work in Ireland the same miracle by which he had glorified the Ministry of Munitions. Being in a hurry, and with but half his thoughts upon his work, he, unluckily, hit upon a solution so extraordinary that its audacity was its only merit, and his elementary ignorance of conditions in Ireland its only excuse. It was nothing less than a proposal to hand over a country where the shots of the insurrection had barely died away to a Provisional Government of Irishmen to be in some apocalyptic manner selected.

It was the first time, during a five years' term of power, Mr. Asquith's Cabinet had thought of calling into counsel a body of Irish Nationalists whose proposals they had hitherto spent their time in deriding and thwarting. It was possibly the reports the Prime Minister had brought back from Dublin, which gave them their first inkling that Mr. Redmond and the Hibernians were a spent force, and made them rush to a conclusion equally extreme in the opposite direction, that ours was the only Parliamentary force left which had any chance of retaining the confidence of the young men and at the same time of reassuring the Unionist minority. According to the official calculation, plainly, the All-for-Ireland League offered the principal hope of working out Mr. Lloyd George's impulsive plan for straightening out the Irish tangle. The compliment was a pretty one; but belated homage of that kind, it can scarcely be necessary to say, was not likely to shake our conviction that the



proposal now shadowed forth rather than put in definite terms was a fantastic and impossible one, and from the outset of my first conversation with Mr. Lloyd George I thought it a duty without ambiguity to tell him so. The idea apparently was the formation of all sorts of elements, Nationalist and Unionist, into a Provisional Government to "carry on" until the war was over. In a country where the fires of civil war were only half extinguished, where the insurrectionary youth were rather fired than cowed by the fate of their leaders before the bullets of the firing platoons and the savage sentences of the courts-martial, one set of Nationalist Parliamentarians who had forfeited public confidence beyond repair,<sup>1</sup>—another set whose voices had not been allowed to be heard for years in three out of the four provinces—and a third set, the Ulster Covenanters, still raging with the passions which only the world-war prevented from finding vent in an insurrection of their own—were to be miraculously combined to relieve magnanimous England of the responsibility for ruling Ireland. And with what a commission! Nothing less than, with our co-operation and under the protection of a British Army, to give practical effect to the pact between Mr. Redmond and Sir E. Carson set forth in the House of Commons a few weeks before—viz., "to denounce those rebels with horror and detestation and put them down for ever more," and by such means to reduce Ireland to silence until the war was safely over, without the smallest guarantee of any National Settlement worth the name to follow. I should, no doubt, have displayed more of the wisdom of the serpent, had I played with Mr. Lloyd George's suggestion until he had first developed it in all its crazy particulars—if, indeed, he had got so far as thinking

<sup>1</sup> No specific mention was made of Mr. Redmond's Party, but to leave them out would be the one folly uncommitted by the scheme.



out any particulars at all. Prudently or imprudently, I thought it fairer to him and to everybody to make no concealment from the first of my conviction that the institution of an Irish Provisional Government of such a sort and at such a moment was a wildly—almost insanely—impracticable project and could only put an end to the last hope, that after an interval of appeasement our own slower but surer plans of conciliation might once more come within the range of practical politics. Everything was to depend upon our being wheedled into consent to Partition in some shape. That hope once dissipated the Provisional Government was incontinently dropped and this is probably the first intimation the world has got that it was ever in contemplation.

However, I had better let my part in the transaction tell its own story from notes made on the days of the various conversations between us (or in one instance, the day after) while my memory was still fresh :

## MEMORANDA

(MAY 23, 1916)

On a request conveyed through T. M. H (ealy) I met B (onar) L (aw) alone to-day in his room at the House of Commons amidst suffocating clouds of tobacco-smoke. He asked was there no way of taking advantage of the present opportunity? I said for the moment all was chaos. The best thing the Government could do was to try to soften the memory of recent happenings in Dublin by fearless investigation into responsibilities and by leniency all round. He asked was not some settlement—even a provisional one—possible? I said anything hastily patched up was sure to turn out badly, but if a policy of appeasement were first tried for six months, there would be every prospect of bringing the best Irishmen together



to devise some generous settlement before the war was over. Our own position had been stated in a sentence to A (squith) when he was in Cork : " Any price for a United Ireland, but Partition—never under any possible circumstances." " Then," he said, shaking his head : " It is all up. It is useless to think of Ulster coming in." " For the moment I quite agree," I said. " That is why I despair of any move while feeling is at present fever heat on both sides." B. L.—" That is very discouraging." O B.—" Who can be otherwise than discouraged ? Do you suppose the tragedy of it all, and of what might have been is not haunting me day and night ? Better discourage you than mislead you into thinking Partition in any shape can ever do anything except make bad worse."

He quite agreed that facts had to be faced, and asked " if I should have any objection to meet Sir E. C(arson) and Col. Craig ?" I replied not the least—that I never obtruded my views on others but was always willing to state them frankly to anybody who cared to listen. He said Sir E. had always expressed the highest respect for my action for the last ten years, but he dared say there would be little use in our meeting if my position as to the exclusion of Ulster was unalterable. " But could not," he again suggested, " something be patched up even provisionally ? Would it not be possible for you in a Parliament of the other three provinces to become leader of a powerful Opposition, with the Unionists of the South on your side and in that way bring round Ulster ?" I said he little knew the Unionists of the South. In the higher interests of Ireland I had been fighting for their lives at the risk of my own for the past thirteen years and not more than a dozen of them had dared come on a platform to declare for me, although they were all ready enough to protest their sympathy in secret. I did not blame them. They were intimidated like our own people by the political machine and would be more back-



boneless than ever in an assembly from which Ulster was banished. B. L.—“Do you think it would be quite impossible to attract Ulster back, if the thing was approached temporarily in a friendly spirit?” I replied that “a three-quartered Parliament in Dublin would be hopelessly handicapped from the first. They would have no funds for anything except to pay the placehunters, and there would be no generous spirit to appeal to. They would divide from the first day into two bodies—the placemen and their backers, and the young idealists who would shrink from the whole ugly business and turn to other means—that is to say, if you could even get them to tolerate the thing at all. You could not. Any attempt to vivisect the country they would regard as the worst crime in all England’s catalogue. You would probably have the barricades thrown up again in Dublin on the opening day. Whereas Ulster had only to remember they were Irishmen, and come in on the magnificent terms which we proposed, and which they now could have with universal assent, and the bare fact of such an Irish Reunion would do more to capture and disarm the *Sinn Féiners* than ever your armies will do, and you would at once have all the materials for a strong and level-headed National Government of Ireland. All this could have been brought about without much difficulty five or six years ago, before the Larne gun-running commenced, if A(squith) had then gone to Ireland in the same spirit of conciliation and concession as he has just done. Now it is both too late and too soon. You have set up an Ulster Provisional Government and you have brought an Irish Republic on the scene. But I don’t say for a moment all is lost. Spend the next six months in cultivating a better feeling and your opportunity may quite possibly come again.”

That, he said, might well be, but that would involve a long delay, and he seemed to intimate that in the meantime the men behind R. were forcing him to go



back to a policy of Obstruction, in order to recover their popularity, and that the effect might be disastrous to the prospects of the Allies. I said in their desperation anything was possible, but Parliamentary obstruction would be less harmful than if they grasped at a Partition of Ireland Act which they would be wholly incapable of getting to work, for they would have the whole race against them. The main strength of the Rebellion was that it was the reaction against the bungling and corruption by which the country had been ruled in obedience to a sham-Catholic secret society which did far more to alarm Protestant Ulster and to compromise the highest interests of England than the uprising of the fine young fellows they had just been shooting down in Dublin. The one hope was to appeal to a higher and broader Irish patriotism.

B. L., who impressed me much by his straightforwardness, again expressed his feeling of dejection, but said, "We've got to do something," and said there might still be some use in a meeting between C. and myself. So we parted. In the beginning of the interview he intimated that, if it should be found necessary to appoint a Liberal as Chief Secretary, his friends were inclined to favour L(oyd) G(eorge) although he knew what I thought of him. But he did not leave the impression that anything had actually been decided upon.

P.S.—A few hours later the L. G. nomination was announced by L. G. himself to T. M. H. as a *fait accompli*.

(MAY 25, 1916)

T. M. H. told me L. G. had called him into his room, and asked if I would be willing to see him. H. said he did not know owing to his treatment of me on certain occasions L. G. might remember. But, of course, no such objection could be thought of. Met



him to-day at the Metropole (Munitions Headquarters). He said, "I suppose you know why I want you. I am going to see what I can do for Ireland." I replied: "I suppose you are tired of being told you are a man of courage. But I am afraid that is the only comfort I can give you on your journey." "Things are very bad," he said, "but is it quite so bad as that?" O'B.—"I was once one of the most sanguine of men, but I am nearer to despair of anything I can do than I was ever before in the darkest times." L. G.—"Oh, come, you are a brave Irishman. Something will have to be done. Is there no way of getting all the best Irishmen together, even provisionally?" He then said he knew I would dismiss from my mind all former differences between us—that, of course, he knew how I felt about the old budget troubles—that, as I knew, he would have excluded Ireland altogether if he had been allowed. "You admitted yourself I was bound to be guided by the majority of the Irish Party." I said a very much worse thing in my eyes was his appropriating the first of the Home Rule Parliament's four sessions for his Insurance Act, and forcing it upon Ireland, and also his part in the abominable finances of the Home Rule Bill. Worst of all, he must forgive me if I did not find it easy to forget that he had destroyed the Irish Party by making them Treasury pensioners. So long as Irishmen were doing good work in Parliament their countrymen never refused to support them generously. Now they had ceased to depend on the Irish people, and in consequence Irish seats in Parliament had become like Dispensary Doctorships or Corporation jobs, a mere scramble among men with the longest tailed families and the least creditable secret influence. Hence the kind of men the Irish Party were now filled with. "Yes," he said, "those who have turned up since Parnell's time are a poor lot. What has become of your young men?" I



could not help blurting out : " Those of them your Government have not turned into place-hunters you have been shooting in Kilmainham Jail. You have ruled Ireland for six years through a pseudo-Catholic Secret Society of the most sordid kind, and you are now face to face with the reaction. Your own Secret Society is being countered with another, which is at least worlds above it in idealism and disinterestedness."

He took it all with great good humour. " I suppose you are referring to Devlin's Society, the Hibernians ? " he said, and then laughingly : " Healy told me while I was disendowing the Church in Wales I was endowing the Molly Maguire Church in Ireland." He asked : " Is Devlin's Society really confined to Catholics ? " I said : " You did not do me the honour of listening while I was endeavouring to get you not to endow them under the Insurance Act, or you would know that this Hibernian Society is so exclusively Catholic that Grattan or Robert Emmet or Parnell as Protestants would be debarred from membership unless they first pledged themselves to frequent the Catholic Sacraments. Even their Catholicity is such a sham that the Order was a few years ago under interdict from Rome, which was only raised on their abandoning the blasphemous form of initiation which was by placing the postulant's hand upon a crucifix while making his vow of secrecy." L. G. touched the bell and asked the Secretary to 'phone to the Irish Office for the numbers of the Ancient Order of Hibernians in Ireland. I told him R(edmond) in the House of Commons estimated them at 90,000, but they had since much increased. The Hibernian " Approved Society " under the Insurance Act would not probably represent one third of the total. The reply came back from the Irish Office that they would have to telegraph to Ireland for particulars. I found it hard to refrain from commenting on these two grotesque instances of the wisdom with which Ireland is governed—that



L. G. did not know the Mollies were an exclusively Catholic body, and that nobody in the Irish Office could tell him the numbers of what had been for years the most formidable organisation in Ireland. I apologised if I had been a bit rough, but it was because the Government had closed their ears to the most elementary facts that they had landed themselves and us in the present mess.

"Well," he said, with unbroken good humour, "something will have to be done and you must help us." I replied: "Willingly if I could honestly tell you I can see anything to be done for the moment except mischief. As I told B. L. when he was kind enough to ask me, it is both too late and too soon—too late for the concessions that might have won Ulster four or five years ago, and too soon to hope that any small haphazard measures can have any effect upon the passions now raging. You might as well try to quench a live volcano with a watering pot." "Do you really think the insurrectionary spirit is still alive, or at least that it will spread?" he asked. I replied by repeating some verses written by Pearse the night before his execution: "How are you going to put down a spirit like that? They may seem poor verses enough, but they will strike a spark from many millions of souls." "It is all very sad," he said, "but they have no leaders." "Leaders have a way of turning up in Ireland when they are least expected," was my comment. "A few years ago you might have won them all—both *Sinn Féin* and Ulster."

He admitted that no real concessions had ever been made to Ulster. "No," I said, "strict justice perhaps, but justice raw and unboiled. When I proposed some real concessions, I was set upon with the cry that I was handing Ireland over to the veto of twelve Orangemen, and when on behalf of my friends, I made the only protest ever heard in this House against the bargain for the Partition of Ireland, our people were



told in their lying newspapers that we had voted against Home Rule, and it was upon that villainous cry our candidates were beaten at the County Council and District Council elections." I noticed that L. G. at once pricked up his ears and looked thoughtful. Quite clearly, the opportunist politician had jumped to the conclusion that the Partition of Ireland could not be such an unpopular measure, since we had suffered at the polls for protesting against it. I soon disabused him of the illusion. "That," I said, "was how the corruptionists blinded the unfortunate people to the truth. Now that honest Irishmen are beginning to realise what really happened they would tear the fellows limb from limb that would attempt to play the game of Partition in their name."

L. G. changed the subject and pressed me whether something might not still be done, even provisionally "until the war was over" (a phrase that struck harshly on my ear) and for the first time made any direct reference to the Provisional Government scheme. The suggestion was a purely tentative one. He did not go into particulars as to how it was to be formed, but I inferred we were to be a sort of connecting link. I was amazed and told him so in pretty candid terms, for he seemed immediately to draw back. I told him bluntly any such thing was at this moment impracticable; no genuine Nationalist could touch it as a nominee of England and while the country was under the heel of martial law. "Well," he said, "there must be good Irishmen whom it might be well to take into consultation," and questioned me as to names. He seemed to regard R. as *fini* and no longer of much account. I agreed, but with regret. R.'s judgment was all right, but circumstances were too strong for him and he ended generally by doing the wrong thing. He mentioned Sir Horace Plunkett. I said I had never entertained any unfriendly feeling for P. He was a high-minded and devoted Irishman only



that he got it into his head that the history of Ireland began with——” “With his creameries—Yes,” broke in L. G. I remarked that with the more go-ahead farmers he had a good deal of influence, but was detested by the town shopkeepers. “Including Dillon,” he interjected with a grin. Various names were canvassed, nearly all of whom I spoke favourably of, but doubted whether there was any personality that could bring them together in the present *culbute générale*. Stephen Gwynn’s name cropped up. L. G. remarked that Gwynn did not speak bitterly of any one. I agreed. L. G. was surprised to hear G. was a Protestant. I added that he was a grandson of William Smith O’Brien, who was a Protestant, too. L. G. looked a bit bewildered as if it were the first time he heard speak of Smith O’Brien. I recalled that Gwynn, M’Murrough Kavanagh and a number of other clever young Protestants had begun by joining Lord Dunraven, but were intimidated by the abuse of all who came over to us in the Molly Press and allowed themselves to be seduced by seats in Parliament which the Mollies alone could give. Two of the most valued Protestant members of the Land Conference were silenced with baronetcies by the Aberdeens, and T. W. Russell, who might have been an immense power among the Ulster Dissenters allowed himself to be bullied into “toeing the line” and got his job. “His influence now does not count” was L. G.’s comment.

I said that was how the elements that might have brought about as easy a settlement on Home Rule as upon the far more envenomed Agrarian problem had been debauched, or frightened. He questioned me as to who would be an acceptable Lord Lieutenant, adding to my amazement: “You know I am not going to be Chief Secretary” (shrugging his shoulders) “I could not think of pinning myself to an office like that.” I said that would be a very grievous disappoint-



ment to begin with. "I might go over to see for myself how things stand." I inferred from his reference to Wimborne that he had thrown over Wimborne. I told him he must quite understand that I wanted nothing for anybody, and I only ventured opinions about individuals very reluctantly and solely because he knew so little of the country. Dunraven was of all the Irish Unionists the man of most capacity and tolerance as a statesman, but I took it for granted would be of all men the least welcome to R.'s friends or masters, although in their present plight they might grasp at anything. He was curiously enough abused for the two very things that would secure his fame by and bye—his success in reconciling the landlords to give up landlordism, and in breaking the hostility of the Southern Unionists to Home Rule. But I presumed his time had not yet come. L. G. shook his head, but said nothing. I mentioned a few other names—Lord Carnarvon, whose father was the first great Englishman to embrace Home Rule and had suffered for doing so ; Lord Shaftesbury who had been three times Lord Mayor of Belfast, was Chancellor of the Belfast University, and was known to be at heart reconciled to Home Rule by consent ; and the Duke of Devonshire, of whom I only knew that his children lived at Lismore and loved Ireland better than England. He asked what of Lord Derby ? I said I knew nothing *pro* or *con*, except that his name would be identified in Ireland with recruiting and possibly conscription.

Had I any objection to talking things over with Sir E. Carson and Col. Craig ? I told him I had no objection to meeting anybody of any section, with the possible exception of Devlin (for reasons I must decline to discuss) ; at which he made a gesture of annoyance which convinced me that Devlin and he have not yet broken off relations, and that he thinks D. may still find refuge in the Labour ranks. We



then drifted away into general talk of the situation. He referred with great cordiality to my brother-in-law, Arthur Raffalovich, whose familiarity with the laws of currency seemed to have made an enormous impression upon him, and whose geniality and mastery of English was most welcome to him in his communications with the Russian Minister of Finance. He took an extremely gloomy view of the war, saying that the Italians were doubled up and France bleeding to death. He agreed with me that what England wanted was not men, but a man, admitting that the new style of unwarlike English conscripts could not very much count. He was quite alive to the superiority of the French as soldiers, and spoke with enthusiasm of some of their generals—Pétain, Castelnau and a little Breton, Maud'huy, whom he had met, but referred with alarming irreverence to Joffre who, he said, owed his position to political reasons, there being a dread in Republican France of any too successful soldier—all of which, it must be owned, impressed me with the superficiality of his own judgments. We parted on the understanding that he was to arrange an interview with C.

(MAY 30, 1916)

Met Sir E. C. with L. G. at Metropole. C. said he was afraid there was no prospect of a satisfactory settlement "for the moment." "That," I observed, "was exactly what I had been advising L. G.," but I was glad to think his statement implied that later on, when the present bitterness abated, a settlement by consent was quite on the cards before the winter was over. C. concurred, adding that the difficulties of anything immediate had been greatly aggravated by the Rebellion. People in Ulster were constantly asking him how were they to hand over the country to the authors of the Pro-German rebellion and of



certain speeches in the House. I burned to make a different answer and remind him of Catiline complaining of sedition, but contented myself with recalling that we had never promised that Ireland was to be won except by H. R., and yet the mere proffer of H. R.—miserable a fiasco as it was turning out to be—had revolutionized Irish resentment so far that there must be at least five hundred thousand Irish soldiers fighting in the various Allied armies. L. G. nodded approvingly. C. said he was speaking of the difficulties in dealing with Ulster. Apart from the religious trouble, which he never liked to speak of, there was the dread of the commercial men for their trade, and the hostility of the Northern workmen who were constantly passing to and fro between Belfast and Glasgow and Liverpool. He had always thought separate Trade Union laws was one of the mistakes of those who framed the H. R. Bill. I intimated that it was a perfectly adjustable difficulty, as the Southern Trade Unionists were just as inextricably mixed up with the British Trade Unions.

C. said that H. R. Government had proceeded all along on the assumption that Ulster did not count. I said that could never be charged against my friends and myself at all events. C. said he had always felt that from the beginning I had realised the situation, but R. told them there was no longer an Ulster problem. L. G. (in amazement)—“Did he really say that?” C.—“He did, indeed, and said there would be no difficulty in putting down any resistance in Ulster with the strong hand.” I said that kind of thing was bluff—there was bluff on all sides. The cards of my friends and myself were on the table all the time. If Ulster would only join us in Dublin, she could practically name her own terms. The Irish Unionists would become the biggest individual Party in an Irish Parliament, and might even be its rulers if they threw themselves into a patriotic and sensible programme.



C.—“ You cannot expect Ulster to come in just now.”  
 O’B.—“ No, nor anybody else. That is why I urge there should be nothing precipitate. Spend the next six months in mollifying the present bitterness—take your military precautions by all means, but don’t be afraid to own there were faults on both sides. Trust to leniency rather than to force, and we will then be all in a better humour to come together in a United Ireland.” L. G. (with sudden energy)—“ In six months the war will be lost.” C. (throwing up his arms)—“ If the war is lost we are all lost.” L. G.—“ The Irish-American vote will go over to the German side. They will break our blockade and force an ignominious peace on us, unless something is done, even provisionally, to satisfy America.” O’B.—“ That is to say, of course, that whatever is to be done shall be done for war purposes. Take care I beg of you, in the interests of the war as well as of Ireland, that you will not infuriate Irish-American feeling rather than appease it. I most solemnly believe that will be the result if you attempt anything on the basis of splitting up Ireland. Make no mistake about it we are at a point at which all our labours for a better feeling for the last thirteen years may be lost. All honest Irish feeling will be so fiercely against you, you will have to send an army corps to open your mutilated Dublin Parliament and in spite of them the people will bundle the whole crew of them into the Liffey. And ” (turning to C.) “ don’t think I say it in any way as a taunt, but what happened in Dublin the other day would be child’s play compared with the horrors in Belfast. Your men are dogged fighters, no doubt, but so are ours, you will admit. Even if you could outnumber them, and it would be a tougher job than you had in Easter Week in Dublin, you would have to reckon with the rest of Ireland, and with hundreds of thousands of Irish soldiers when they get back from the war.” C. did not utter a word of dissent.



L. G. clung obstinately to his view that, come what might, something must be done before the American elections or Wilson would be returned and the war lost.<sup>1</sup> He announced positively that the Government had information that the Germans were planning a new descent upon Ireland. He spoke again with the utmost gloom of the military situation, and in such exaggerated terms that the object was plainly to frighten C. Not without success; for C. was visibly affected and said with a deep emphasis that Ulster would go very far indeed rather than see the war lost. That was all he could say. L. G.—“It is saying a great deal. It is a very important statement.” O’B.—“So important that if it means a United Ireland, we are all at one. But that is just the point, and there is no use trying to blink it. What ideal men have for ages been suffering for is Ireland a Nation. Go on with this Partition business, and you would make the very name of Ireland an impossible one. You would have to find two new names for it—I suppose Orangia and Molly-Maguire-land—and you would leave five-sixths of an honest Irish race without a country or an ideal.” L. G.—“We are only speaking of a provisional arrangement.” O’B.—“A ‘provisional’ arrangement that is to last until Col. Craig and his men of their own free will walk into a bankrupt Dublin Parliament, for the pleasure of being ruled by Mr. Devlin and his Mollies.” C. avowed that he had never liked Partition. The Ulster men had grasped at it as their only chance of preserving their British citizenship, and nothing else had been offered them. They had before them the fate of the Unionists of the

<sup>1</sup> This curious prediction is another instance of *quantula sapientia regitur mundus*. The candidate favoured by England, I gathered, was Roosevelt, who was, in his own phrase, “beaten to a frazzle” in the Republican Convention. By another blunder, no less comical, of the Washington Embassy, the real Republican candidate, Mr. Hughes, was reported to be an enemy of England.



South. In Cork itself they had been driven out of the County Council and the Corporation, and that, he believed, because they were supposed to be in favour of O'Brien's concessions to the North." O'B.—“Rather because these concessions had not been closed with by the Irish Unionists themselves. My own friends met the same fate and are very proud of it. Things of that kind are to be expected everywhere from an unscrupulous political machine. A genuine Irish Parliament would soon deal with the gang who run it, if the Irish Unionists would only look on Ireland as their own country, and give us a chance.”

L. G. pressed me again to make some alternative suggestions, saying: “I have failed to get a single suggestion of any kind from the other people. Whatever I propose they will find fault with, but they will not take the responsibility of making a single definite suggestion themselves.” O'B.—“They are waiting until they see how the cat will jump in Ireland, no doubt. But you have had my alternative suggestions before you all the time—I have never criticised without offering some counter-proposal, and you would never listen.” L. G.—“Yes, but now?” O'B.—“I have told you quite definitely what my view is—six months of conciliatory government to pave the way for a Conference of Irishmen on the basis of a United Ireland, with whatever aid you can get from Overseas Prime Ministers like those of Canada and Australia where Ulstermen and Nationalists live side by side in freedom without friction.” L.G.—“But can you give us no suggestion of something to be done at once to save the war?” I said that was to me a new situation and it was not quite fair to expect me to be prepared with any considered proposal, but as far as I could judge on the spur of the moment, a far more effective way of impressing American and Irish opinion than the experiment he had mentioned which was bound to fail badly and at once, for want of any basis of



agreement, would be that Parliament should give Ireland some such guarantee of freedom after the war as the Tsar and the Duma had given with such striking effect to Poland. It ought to be possible to arrange a debate which would be practically unanimous and would at once strike the imagination of Ireland and of America. C. and L. G. were afraid the difficulties would be almost insurmountable. L. G. (with bitterness)—“ You would have somebody like Dillon starting up without even knowing the effect of what he was saying and wrecking the whole business.” O’B.—“ If you refer to his performance of the other night he knew perfectly well what he was at. He was only trying to make Dublin habitable for him. But that only proves D. can be easily enough brought to bow to the inevitable.”

I then urged upon C. that he knew how to put his views in such a way, with all that was at stake, as to strike a note that would capture the hearts of young Irishmen, Sinn Féiners and all. If he would then take a secret Referendum—“ yes ” or “ no ”—of the Covenanters upon a letter of advice signed by himself, and such men as Craig, Londonderry, Shaftesbury and Sharman Crawford (whose name was still one to conjure with among the Dissenters) 90 per cent. of the Covenanters outside Belfast and Portadown would gladly endorse his action and give him a mandate to see things through. C.—“ I don’t even know whether I could get these people to sign it.” O’B.—“ If you will allow me to say it, the great mistake you make about Ulster is to minimise your own power there. Without you, we should still have plenty of street riots, but nothing more formidable.” C. shook his head and laughed. I added that all the vows of the Covenanters were made against a Home Rule Bill which was now given up or rendered unworkable by its own authors. There would be the advantage of beginning with a clean slate, with possibly some big



scheme of Federation of the whole Empire in which the Covenanters' right of Imperial citizenship might stand upon the same footing as if they were Englishmen. C. said he had always felt and even publicly stated that the situation might be entirely changed under some Federal arrangement which would preserve to Ulster its Imperial standing and under which Ireland might be treated as a unit, with general consent.<sup>1</sup> L. G. pressed me to put my suggestions in writing. I said I should willingly do so, although no doubt any Irishman who made a helpful suggestion of any kind at this moment took his life in his hands. As C. stood up to leave he, I think, greatly surprised both of us by stating that, having regard to the exigencies of the war, which were to him the supreme consideration, he would consult with his friends in Ulster and advise them to reconsider the whole situation under the new conditions we had been discussing, L. G.—“That is a very important declaration indeed.” I left immediately after.<sup>2</sup> I am confident I have

<sup>1</sup> Subsequent developments led me often and anxiously to jog my memory on this point, and I have not a shadow of doubt that this *précis*, made at the moment, accurately records Sir E. Carson's statement that, in the Federal arrangement to which he looked forward with hope, Ireland was to be dealt with as a unit.

<sup>2</sup> Some minor episodes in the conversation, which were also noted at the time, may here be added:

L. G. (to me)—“Did not Sir Edward once prosecute you?” O'B. (laughingly)—“Have you already forgotten your old leader's injunction to ‘Remember Mitchelstown’?” C. (with marked cordiality)—“I think Mr. O'Brien is the most forgiving Irishman I ever met.” O'B.—“Oh, all these things were the fortunes of war, and we had the comfort of knowing we gave as good as we got.” I thought L. G. winced perceptibly at the reference to my readiness to forgive.

In the course of some reference to R. (whom L. G. seemed rather disposed to regard as a back number) I remarked: “Give R. his brief and I know no man who can make a more eloquent use of it in the House of Commons.” C.—“That is so. He has an admirable manner. R. and I always got on very well, we began together on the same circuit.” L. G.—“Did R. have



noted all the references to Partition made in the interview. L. G. when I pressed him as to his own position only said: "Mind, I am making no proposition."

The next morning (May 31) I sent the promised Memo. to Mr. Lloyd George, who was attending a Cabinet meeting.

In a covering letter, I wrote: "Enclosed jottings are the best I can do as the result of my cogitations last evening. If you like to see me again, I shall be at your disposal all this day and to-morrow, after which 'Bellevue, Mallow, Co. Cork,' will find me. But I am far from wishing to obtrude myself unnecessarily. I hope enclosed *communiqué* from to-day's *Times* is not accurate.<sup>1</sup> Any confident announce-

much practice?" C.—"No, but it was because he became a politician. That I have never done. I have remained a lawyer first and a politician afterwards."

Lord Pirrie was mentioned by L. G., who said he supposed he had no influence in Belfast. C.—"No. He preferred a peerage to the power he might have had as the head of his great shipbuilding yard." L. G.—"I don't think you or I would make that mistake."

Referring to the effect a broad National pronouncement from C. would have on young Irishmen, I mentioned that Professor John MacNeill, up to the eve of the Rising the Commander-in-Chief of the Volunteers, was attacked by a Molly crowd in Cork for calling for "Three cheers for Carson and the Ulster Volunteers!" and the Chairman of the meeting—a Cork Town Councillor named Walsh, sentenced to death for his part in the Rising, had got his skull fractured on the same occasion. "Is that really the case?" asked L. G. C.—"Yes. I noticed it at the time, but I thought it was that poor Swift MacNeill, the M.P., who was referred to." O'B.—"The Sinn Féin MacNeill was once a believer in Redmond and his policy, as Walsh was in mine." C.—"Indeed, he was. I have a document signed by Redmond and MacNeill appealing for subscriptions for their Volunteers. They proposed to take the defence of the shores of Ireland into their own hands, whatever that might mean." L. G. looked as if the Irish Sphinx was too much for him.

<sup>1</sup> Referring to a statement that Mr. Lloyd George would on the motion for the Adjournment for the Recess announce an Irish Settlement on the basis of the Buckingham Palace Conference.



ment just yet would almost surely lead to bitter disappointment hereafter and would force me, at least, to make it clear that the Buckingham Palace basis—which was Partition—is for us impossible and even undiscussable. Indeed that seemed to be the view of our interlocutor of last evening as well.”

The Memo. simply elaborated my suggestion that “if, unfortunately, it should be essential to take any decisive public action at once,” the best way of favourably impressing both Ireland and America would be an ‘agreed’ debate in the House of Commons involving a distinct pledge of National Self-Government for Ireland, “acceptable to the people of every part of the country,” to be worked out by a small conciliatory Conference. I now added the suggestion (notable in view of subsequent events) that the debate “should be initiated by an impressive message from the King (the Tsar did the same in the case of Poland)” in which case, “it seems impossible to imagine that any responsible person of any Party, British or Irish, should misconduct himself. . . .”

“All would, of course, depend on the nature of Sir E. Carson’s declaration. If he were armed with the assent of the Covenanters (which he might with certainty obtain upon a strong representation of the War Danger and a guarantee that any agreed settlement hereafter would be founded not on the present Bill but on a new Federal arrangement securing to the Ulstermen substantially the same rights of Imperial citizenship as to Englishmen, Scotchmen or Welshmen) he might safely be trusted to lay the proper emphasis upon the readiness of Ulster to reconsider the situation under these new conditions, and to do so in a manner that would appeal to the imagination of young Irishmen in Ireland and in America, rousing their National pride and dispelling any apprehension of dismemberment of the country. What would be most important would be a definite promise to go into



Conference with all sections of his countrymen with a view to the reconsideration of the entire question of a new and wiser settlement by consent. It can hardly be doubted that Mr. Bonar Law, Mr. Walter Long and other men who carry weight in Ulster would co-operate."

The Memo. wound up in these words : " Please bear in mind that these suggestions are only made, at your request, as a bad second best to my own preference for slower and better matured action, nothing except the War Emergency in the least shaking my belief that any sudden or ill-advised attempt to solve the difficulty (so to say) ' by miracle ' will only lead to more widespread dangers hereafter. And it must be clearly understood that, to any scheme expressly or impliedly contemplating Partition in any form, my friends and myself are unalterably opposed."

Neither to the Memo. nor to the accompanying letter did I ever receive a reply. But Mr. Lloyd George did publish in the *Times* of the following morning an official denial of the *communiqué* of the previous day, and he made no statement of any kind before the Adjournment for the Recess. For good reason, as will be seen in the following chapter.



## CHAPTER XVII

## THE FINAL SURRENDER OF THE SIX COUNTIES

THE madcap "Irish Provisional Government" scheme for "putting down those rebels for evermore" was not heard of again. Apparently without a day's delay, Mr. Lloyd George dropped it and fell back on the Buckingham Palace Partition project in an aggravated form. Having once opted for Partition he paid me the compliment of recognising that other and more accommodating counsellors would have to be called in. Here consequently stopped my own inner knowledge of his operations. We must await the confidences of the other parties to these transactions (if we are not destined to wait in vain) in order to be able fully to reconstruct the history of the next week, but it may be safely concluded that on the very day following his interview with Sir E. Carson and myself, Mr. Lloyd George summoned Mr. Redmond and Sir E. Carson to the Hotel Metropole to discuss a wholly different programme and it is certain that before the end of the week, Partition was the settled policy of the Government, of the Hibernian Party and of Sir E. Carson, with the Four Counties of the Buckingham Palace Conference advanced to Six, and the Six Counties established as a separate autonomous State.

Fortunately the dates enable us to fill up with tolerable accuracy the gaps in the strange and wonderful story of the famous "Headings of Agreement" arrived at between Mr. Lloyd George, Mr. Redmond and Sir E. Carson<sup>1</sup>. Inasmuch as it is to that instru-

<sup>1</sup> It was never officially stated that Mr. Lloyd George included in his invitations Mr. Dillon, whom he had the previous day referred to in terms of undisguised dislike and contempt, but Mr. Dillon himself proudly insisted that he was one of the high contracting parties to "The Headings of Agreement."



ment is unquestionably to be traced the collapse of the Parliamentary Movement, and the recognition of Partition as the indispensable basis of all negotiations for the future, it becomes a matter of high historic importance that the circumstances in which it was negotiated and under which it was subsequently abandoned should be ascertained in some detail. On May 31st Mr. Lloyd George was in possession of my Memo. containing the suggestion (since "something must be done at once") of a solemn Parliamentary Guarantee of National Self-Government for a United Ireland on the initiative of the King, to be followed by a policy of all-round lenity in the administration. To that communication (invited, not volunteered), no reply was given. On June 10th, little more than a week later, Mr. Redmond was able to call his Party together in the Mansion House, Dublin, and to announce the "Headings of Agreement" between Mr. Lloyd George, Sir E. Carson and himself for the surrender of the Six Counties upon terms, open and covert, in the highest degree discreditable to the British Minister and to the Irish leader. On June 12th, two days afterwards, Sir E. Carson obtained the assent of his Ulster Unionist Council in Belfast. On June 13th, the next day, a special Convention of the Board of Erin Order of Hibernians (not, observe, of the public organisation, the United Irish League) was held in Dublin, so secretly that no news of the event leaked out until the following morning, and no official report was issued at all. It was discovered, however, that the object of the secret Convention was to secure the influence of the Order in extorting the consent of the Nationalists of the Six Counties to the terms under which they were to be surrendered to the Orange Free State, and this result Mr. Devlin, who, as National President of the Board of Erin, occupied the chair, succeeded in accomplishing after five hours' discussion. Within less than two weeks, therefore, the charm was wound up, and the bargain clandestinely



concluded between the Covenanters and the Hibernians, without the slightest pretence of consulting the country in general, or even the open organisation of the United Irish League, whose Constitution once proclaimed it to be the sovereign National authority in Irish affairs, but which had by this time dwindled into the innocuous outward shell of the Hibernian Secret Society.

The double object of Mr. Lloyd George's latest *coup* was to keep America in play by exhibiting before her eyes the spectacle of a great Home Rule settlement actually accomplished by mutual consent, and to keep both the American and the Irish mind bewildered as to its terms until the American elections were over. It was not for many months afterwards that either America or Ireland began to find out that the new bargain was one to expunge from the Home Rule Act the Clause that was its saving salt—the establishment of a National Parliament—and to amputate from the mother country, six counties, illustrious as the scenes of her most heroic battles against English conquest, and containing all but a fourth of her population and wealth. The enormity could, of course, never have been perpetrated without the connivance of a Party of Irish "Nationalists" who would have been hooted into oblivion if they had given the faintest hint of such a programme to the constituencies by which they were elected.

The first deceit practised upon the country was that, while Mr. Redmond published through his Party on June 10th what purported to be a summary of the "Headings of Agreement," the full text was not published until seven weeks later (July 28th) after the bargain had collapsed, and was published then, not by Mr. Redmond or at his desire, but by the Government in their own defence. There was a more painful discovery still. It was found that the authentic text contradicted in its most vital particulars the version which Mr. Redmond had been induced to put



before the country to calm their apprehensions and to manoeuvre them into consent. The two versions of the First Article of the Headings of Agreement have only to be printed side by side to illustrate the seriousness of the discrepancy.

## MR. REDMOND'S

## SUMMARY.

1. To bring the Home Rule Act into immediate operation.

## THE ACTUAL TEXT.

1. The Government of Ireland Act, 1914, to be brought into operation as soon as possible after the passing of the Bill, *subject to the modifications necessitated by these instructions.*

The First Article as published in Dublin was one well skilled to befool Irish opinion, for it seemed to promise the immediate realization of all the hopes embodied in "the Act on the Statute-Book." The true text of the bargain, containing the words "subject to the modifications necessitated by these instructions" put a very different complexion on the transaction, for one of "the necessary modifications" was to be the repeal of the First Clause of the Act of 1914, viz.: "1. On and after the appointed day *there shall be in Ireland an Irish Parliament*, consisting of his Majesty the King and two Houses namely the *Irish Senate* and the *Irish House of Commons.*"

In other words, the repeal and annulment of the solemn recognition of the unity of Ireland as a Nation. Nor was the public mind much clarified by Mr. Redmond's presentation of the Second Article.

## MR. REDMOND'S

2. To introduce at once an Amending Bill, as a strictly War Emergency Act, to cover only the

## THE ACTUAL TEXT.

2. The said Act not to apply to the Excluded Area, which is to consist of the six counties of



period of the War and a short specified interval after it.

Antrim, Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, L'derry, and Tyrone, including the Parliamentary Boroughs of Belfast, Londonderry and Newry.

Nothing could be less candid or more hazy than the published version ; nothing clearer than the actual wording, which was not published until all was over. To the average plain man, the Amending Bill referred to in Mr. Redmond's version might well seem to be some innocent detail to cease with the war. He got no hint that the genuine Second Article was a proviso that the Home Rule Act was " not to apply to the Excluded Area," without qualification or termination, and the " Excluded Area " was expressly defined and earmarked to be six counties and three corporate boroughs, containing nearly one-fourth of the population of Ireland. Some mention had to be made of the fate of the Six Counties ; but with how much candour may be judged by reading side-by-side Mr. Redmond's Article 4 which was Article 3 of the Actual Text.

#### MR. REDMOND'S

4. During this war emergency period, six Ulster Counties to be left *as at present* under the Imperial Government.

#### THE ACTUAL TEXT.

3. As regards the excluded area the executive power of His Majesty to be administered by a Secretary of State through such Offices and Departments as may be directed by order of His Majesty in Council, those offices and departments not to be in any way responsible to the new Irish Government.



The Six Counties, instead of being "left as at present," were in fact to be erected into a separate State, ruled by a separate Secretary of State and an elaborate series of separate Departments, wholly independent of the Home Rule Government in Dublin. So far from the arrangement only lasting, as the Irish people were jauntily assured "during this war emergency," the text contained no hint of such a limitation, and the very nature of the complicated and expensive machinery of government proposed to be set up in the Six Counties forbade any assumption of a mere stopgap contrivance to be cast aside after the few months in which the war might be concluded. Not to the country, nor to the Hibernian Convention in Belfast—nor it may be surmised to the rank and file of "the Party" itself, was there any disclosure of this carefully-elaborated apparatus of Partition vouchsafed, until the authorised text of the "Headings of Agreement" was published by Mr. Lloyd George after the breakdown of the bargain.

There was another and not less reprehensible concealment of the truth. The Third Article in Mr. Redmond's summary was: "During that period, the Irish members to remain at Westminster in their full numbers." At first sight it might well read as a concession of the first magnitude. It was, in reality, for the politicians, the price of their surrender and it was the subsequent partial repudiation of this Article by the Government on which the Partition bargain was broken off. For what would have been the practical effect of the proviso? It would have established the existing members of the Hibernian Party for the rest of a Parliament which was not to be dissolved as long as the war endured, in the double capacity of members of the Imperial Parliament at Westminster, with the accompanying Treasury stipend of £400 a year, and in addition as the *ipso facto* majority of the mutilated Parliament in Dublin, without re-election, and without



responsibility to the electors who were already hungering for the opportunity of dismissing them from their service. They would thus have obtained the control of an annual patronage of from £2,000,000 to £3,000,000 without the smallest danger of being brought to account by their constituents for a period of at least three years. In the meantime, all the spoils of Dublin Castle, of the Four Courts and of the fifty Castle Boards, of the University, and of the Intermediate and Primary School Staffs, and in addition all the offices of profit of the local governing bodies of three provinces from a Co. Secretaryship or a Town Clerkship to the humblest Workhouse portership, would have been available for distribution among the partisans of the ruling politicians in the Dublin Parliament and an army of officials and office-hunters might thus be enrolled to garrison the three provinces in preparation for the inevitable if far distant day, when the Hibernian Bosses would have to seek a renewal of their powers. True, the volcano which was presently to burst was known to be already deeply burning. But the subterranean fires which the corrupt bargaining or incompetence of the Parliamentarians was doing more than Sir John Maxwell's firing-parties to accumulate, might still be held in check a little while longer. It was with this knowledge the tying the hands and gagging the voice of the constituencies while these tremendous changes were being plotted was deliberately organized, in order that honest opinion should have no chance of showing itself, until the country should be confronted with the *fait accompli*, and the Board of Erin Partitionists installed in sovereign power.

All this the only version of the "Headings of Agreement" placed before the country carefully concealed. It was a scheme of political profligacy more widespread in its sweep, more impudent in its defiance of all constitutional right or privilege in the



people, than that by which Lord Castlereagh purchased the life of the Irish Parliament and which Gladstone thought he was not extravagantly describing as a system of "blackguardism and baseness." It is not to be believed that the mass of the Hibernian Party—plain, blunder-headed men—realized much better than the bewildered people themselves the turpitude of the transaction ; the record stands, however, to the shame of their intelligence, if not of their political morals, that of the 57 members who attended the Party meeting at which the project was disclosed all but two accepted the terms which were to be the price of their assent to the Partition of their country.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Dillon's subsequent complaint against the Government was that "they did not rush" the Headings of Agreement "hot-foot" as a War Emergency measure through the House of Commons as soon as the nominal assent of Ireland had been extorted. He and his confederates were not certainly open to any imputation that they did not for their own part "rush them hot-foot" through Ireland with a haste as indecent and unconstitutional as the proposals themselves. Under the constitution of the United Irish League, a National Convention was the sovereign authority in all matters of National policy. No National Convention was summoned. It was, of course, because no National Convention, however sophisticated, could have been trusted to examine the text of the "Headings of Agreement" without rejecting them with horror. The leaders refused to hold consultation in any form with the people of the three southern provinces, as though the projected mutilation of their nation was no business of theirs. The secret organization of the Board of Erin alone was called into counsel, while the public organization was

<sup>1</sup> The two dissentient members, to their honour be it remembered, were Mr. P. O'Doherty (North Donegal) and Mr. P. J. O'Shaughnessy (West Limerick).



ignored. The Party meeting was held on June 10th. We have seen already on June 13th, a special Convention of the Ancient Order of Hibernians (B.O.E.) was held in Dublin so secretly that the news did not become known until the small hours of the next morning and at this gathering the influence of the Order was pledged in support of the Lloyd George proposals. But even within the ambit of the secret Order, a Convention was only to be risked in the six surrendered counties, where the ascendancy of the Board of Erin was complete.

The upshot of the secret proceedings of June 13th in Dublin was the summoning of a secret Convention of the Six Counties on June 23 in Belfast. Although this Assembly was ruthlessly policed by the Hibernian Order, and the admissions so manipulated as to exclude any but a derisory minority belonging to other organizations, it taxed the most desperate resources of Messrs. Redmond, Dillon and Devlin to conquer the instinctive repugnance of these Ulster Nationalists to respond to the appeal to stand passively by while their country was being cut up on the dissecting table under their eyes and by their sanction. Mr. Redmond, who presided, found it necessary not so much to offer reasons for the surrender as to threaten the collective resignations of Mr. Dillon, Mr. Devlin and himself, if it were not tamely submitted to. So unnatural was the sacrifice demanded that, even amongst the most fanatical of the Hibernian faithful, the murmurs rose high, until nothing short of the menaces and the tears of the leaders could have prevented them from breaking bounds altogether. Mr. Redmond, whose only sedative for his angry listeners was the pitiful assurance that the Partition was to be only of a temporary character, found his only real argument in the solemn threat with which he concluded :

“ It is the duty of a leader to lead, but if my own people refuse to follow my lead, I must decline



absolutely to accept responsibility for a course of action that is against my conscience. I regard the acceptance of these proposals, in the conditions I have stated, as vital to the Irish cause. As leader I point the way. It is for you to say whether you will follow me or not. If, then, this is the last time that I ever can appeal to the people of Ireland, I will have done so in obedience to the dictates of my heart and conscience."

It will be observed that his appeal was not "to the people of Ireland," but to a secret society in one corner of Ireland, and at a secret meeting of which the country would have heard nothing, had not a patriotic reporter, at the risk of a fractured head, jotted down his words. That the lead was not Mr. Redmond's lead, the Convention by a sure instinct divined, for it was Mr. Dillon whose speech was half-drowned with taunts and interruptions identifying him as the true author of the unhappy tactics of which Partition was the miserable culmination. Mr. Dillon, however, continued to protest that "these proposals were a necessary measure to safeguard the National Cause" and promised to "execute himself," like his trusted leader, if the Hibernians thought differently. Even Mr. Devlin—and in Belfast he was in a small way Coriolanus in Corioli—found the accustomed pæan of "Up the Mollies!" changed for an underswell of doubt and wrath from Hibernian throats. He, too, discovered that the threat of resignation offered the only chance of turning the tide and concluded with the heroic resolve that "if Mr. Redmond went down, he, too, would go down with him." Even faced with such an avalanche of leaderless chaos, the most reliable Hibernian Assembly that the Hibernian headquarters could furnish could only be induced to do the unnatural deed and approve the "Headings of Agreement" by a majority of 475 votes against 265. It was actually on the strength of the sulky majority of



210 Belfast Hibernians—the only body of Irish opinion anywhere that was not sternly denied consultation in any shape—that the Parliamentary Party hastened to demand that the separation from Ireland of the Six Counties should be “hurried hot-foot through the House of Commons as a war emergency measure.”



## CHAPTER XVIII

## HOW THE PLOT MISCARRIED

It might well seem there was no further obstacle to be apprehended from Ireland. On the day (June 23) when the Belfast Convention was being coerced by the leaders' threats of resignation, the only public protest against Partition attempted in the South—a meeting called by my colleague Mr. Maurice Healy and myself in the Cork City Hall—was frustrated by the ludicrous misunderstanding already related. The Lord Mayor of Dublin refused the Mansion House to Nationalists who proposed to make the indignation of the Irish capital heard. But as week followed week and the consequences of the bargain began to make themselves understood, no machinery of suppression, however perfect, could altogether stifle the disquiet which was beginning to stir in the heart of the bewildered country. On July 20th, the indignation of the Nationalists of the North blazed out at a meeting in Derry which struck the stoutest of the Partitionists with dismay. The speeches sounded like the first volleys of an insurrection. They were prefaced by the reading of a letter from the Bishop of Derry (Dr. McHugh) inveighing against "Mr. Lloyd George's nefarious scheme" and adding:

"But what seems the worst feature of all this wretched bargaining that has been going on is that Irishmen calling themselves representatives of the people are prepared to sell their brother Irishmen into slavery to secure a nominal freedom for a section of the people. . . . Was coercion of a more objectionable and despicable type ever resorted to by England in



its dealings with Ireland than that now sanctioned by the men whom we elected to win for us freedom ? ”

The Derry meeting came to a series of resolutions condemning “ the proposed partition of Ireland whether temporary or permanent ” pledging the Nationalists of the North “ to oppose by every means any attempt to set up a separate Government for the Ulster counties,” and “ to resist the authority of such a Government if set up,” and summoned the Hibernian members for Fermanagh and Tyrone “ to oppose exclusion or resign their seats.” The example of Derry was contagious. The Nationalists of Dublin, barred out from the Mansion House, ran the risk of holding a public meeting in the Phoenix Park—the first attempted since the proclamation of Martial Law in Easter Week—adopted the Derry resolutions, hooted the name of Mr. Lloyd George, and cheered to the echo the declaration of their Chairman (Alderman Richard Jones, a man of moderate opinions, who had been a steady supporter of Mr. Redmond) that the idea of the Cabinet appeared to be to bribe a whole Party, and that “ if their Parliamentary representatives did not respect their wishes, they must insist on their resignation.” The rising feeling of the nation was mirrored in a letter of the Bishop of Limerick (Dr. O'Dwyer) to a Committee belatedly formed in Belfast to resist the Lloyd George proposals :

“ I can well understand your anxiety and indignation at the proposals of your own political leaders to cut you off from your own country. I have very little pity for you or yours. You have acquiesced in a kind of political servitude in which your function was to shout the shibboleths of what they call ‘ the Party.’ You have ceased to be men ; your leaders consequently think they can sell you like chattels. Our poor country is made a thing of truck and barter in the Liberal Clubs.”

It was this unforeseen outbreak of National anger



which frightened "the Party" into running away from its bargain and consigning the "Headings of Agreement" to the waste-paper basket. The nominal excuse for the rupture—a speech of Lord Lansdowne, alleging that the separation of the Six Counties was not to be a temporary one—was, as will be seen in a moment, a wholly untenable one.<sup>1</sup> The history of the breakdown is a deeply instructive one. On July 10th the Prime Minister (Mr. Asquith) openly avowed that the negotiations had proceeded "on the basis of immediate Home Rule, with six Ulster counties excluded." All his colleagues, he declared, were willing to share the responsibility of bringing in a Bill to legalise these proposals. It was then, also, he for the first time divulged the amazing news that "the Irish House of Commons was to consist of the persons who were for the time being members returned by the same constituencies in Ireland to serve in the Imperial Parliament." The Bill was to be a provisional measure, but he added: "A united Ireland could only be brought about with the assent of the excluded area." This was a sufficiently clear repudiation of the assurances lavished in Ireland during the previous month that Partition was to be "a purely temporary arrangement," but Sir E. Carson took care to put an end to the last shadow of doubt on the subject. Fastening upon the Prime Minister's allusion to the arrangement as provisional, he asked if "the six Ulster Counties would be definitively struck out of the Act of 1914?" Mr. Asquith assented and added that "they could not be included hereafter without a new Bill."

<sup>1</sup> There was a subsidiary complaint—that in order to placate Mr. Walter Long and other Unionist members of the Coalition Cabinet, the proviso, maintaining the Irish Members in full strength at Westminster, was restricted to Irish Members in the existing Parliament only, but as this would still leave the Hibernian Party for three years the masters of the Dublin Parliament and retain them as paid members of the Imperial Parliament as well, the objection was not in itself a serious one.



Mr. Redmond made no attempt to question the Prime Minister's falsification of his own and Mr. Dillon's repeated assurances in Ireland, but the Hibernian Party, silent in presence of Mr. Asquith's official announcement, pounced upon a similar announcement by Lord Lansdowne in the House of Lords on the following day (July 11th) to lay hold of that unfortunate nobleman as their scapegoat. Lord Lansdowne, in the course of a speech explaining the policy which the Government intended to pursue during the transition from military rule to the projected self-government of the future, mentioned that the Amending Bill to give effect to the "Headings of Agreement," "will make structural alterations in the Act of 1914 already on the Statute Book, and therefore will be permanent and enduring in its character, but will contain at other points temporary provisions, such, for example, as those dealing with the House of Commons which it is proposed to set up in the near future." The Hibernian Party did not see fit to arraign Lord Lansdowne's announcement in the House of Commons which there was nothing to prevent them from doing by a Vote of Censure, but upon the day after the speech (July 12th) Mr. Redmond issued a statement to the newspapers furiously denouncing it "as a gross insult and a declaration of war on the Irish people," and declaring that "if this speech were to be taken as representing the attitude and the spirit of the Government towards Ireland there would be an end to all hope of settlement." Lord Lansdowne's reference to the "permanent and enduring character of certain structural alterations in the Act of 1914" was "a gross breach of faith" and "any departure in the direction indicated in Lord Lansdowne's suggestion would, so far as we are concerned, bring the negotiations absolutely to an end." "Valiant words, my masters!" Lord Lansdowne replied the next day (July 13th): "In



making my statement as to the permanent character of certain provisions of the Amending Bill I did not intend to go, and I do not consider that I did go, beyond the declaration made by the Prime Minister in the House of Commons on the 10th instant that the union of the Six Counties with the rest of Ireland could only be brought about with, and can never be brought about without, the free will and assent of the excluded area."

That, of course, was the undeniable truth ; but instead of straightly taking the Home Rule Prime Minister to task and calling for the publication of the text of the "Headings of Agreement" which must have decided the question of "a gross breach of faith" one way or the other, the leader of the Hibernian Party confined himself to an extra Parliamentary dispute in the newspapers with a Tory nobleman who had no friends. An unofficial attempt on the same day (July 13th) to elicit in the House of Commons the real nature of the bargain was, as always happens in such cases, ineffectual :

"Mr. William O'Brien—When may we expect the Irish Amending Bill? Is the Right Hon. Gentleman aware that the Irish people are in a state of utter bewilderment as to what the proposals are? Will he put an end to the suspense by producing the Bill at the earliest possible date?"

Mr. Bonar Law (acting as Leader of the House)—I am sorry that at present I cannot give any date for the introduction of the Bill.

Mr. O'Brien—Can the Right Hon. Gentleman give no indication when we are to have the Bill if ever? Or if we cannot have the Bill is there any objection to publishing as a White Paper the precise terms submitted to Sir E. Carson and Mr. Redmond? Surely there cannot be two different versions?

Mr. Bonar Law—There may be a difference of opinion as to the advisability of adopting that course,



but I can assure the Hon. Gentleman that it is the intention of the Government to produce the Bill as soon as possible."

The Bill was never produced, and the text of the "Headings of Agreement" was never disclosed until after the rupture. Mr. Redmond's rejoinder to Lord Lansdowne (July 14th) was again made through the newspapers, not in his place in the House of Commons. He repeated that there was a distinct violation of the agreement "which was reduced to writing," and the matter "could only be cleared up beyond dispute by the production of the Bill." One might suggest that he himself possessed an equally effective way of "clearing the matter up beyond dispute" by publishing the full terms of the agreement "which was reduced to writing," of which he cannot fail to have secured a copy, and of which he had himself made public a painfully fallacious version in Ireland. A few days later there was not a cough of protest from the Hibernian benches when Mr. Asquith having again dodged a question of Mr. Ian Malcolm calling for the production of the Bill, the present writer interposed with the unceremonious inquiry: "Is not the Prime Minister yet aware that he would have the thanks of every human being in Ireland except the place-hunters if he put this hateful Bill into the fire?"

As a matter of fact all this belabouring of Lord Lansdowne as a whipping-boy in the place of their own Home Rule Prime Minister was in the nature of theatricals, devised to supply a sensational finish before the curtain had to be dropped. What really struck death to their souls was that the storm in Ireland was every day growing angrier. The end came after various alarums and excursions when Mr. Redmond moved the adjournment of the House with the object of tearing up the "Headings of Agreement" and the resulting Bill. He made a fine show of repudiating Mr. Asquith's renewed allegation that even the Home



Rulers in the Cabinet only agreed that the Home Rule Act should be brought into immediate operation on condition that the Six Counties "should not be brought in except by their own consent and by the authority of an Act of Parliament." He repeated that after Lord Lansdowne's speech: "I had only one resource left open to me and I called for the immediate production of the Bill." (He omitted to mention the other resource left open to him, which was to call for the immediate production of the "Headings of Agreement" or to produce them himself). What Mr. Redmond described as "the sorry story" of his last humiliating dealings with the Cabinet on the subject deserves to be reproduced in his own words, as a warning to all Irish negotiators who may be tempted to part with their power of bringing slippery English Ministers to their senses:

"I ask the House to mark what I am now going to say. On July 20th I received a most extraordinary message from the Cabinet to the effect that the consideration of this draft Bill had been postponed and that a number of new proposals had been brought forward. When I asked what the nature of these proposals was, I was informed that the Cabinet did not desire to consult me about them at all, and that they would not communicate with me in the matter until they had again met and had agreed upon what new proposals they would approve of. . . . I asked was any new proposal submitted on the question of the provisional character of the Bill? I was told it was quite impossible to answer my question. The next communication I received was on Saturday last when the Minister for War (Mr. Lloyd George) and the Home Secretary (Mr. Herbert Samuel) requested me to call and see them at the War Office. They then informed me that another Cabinet Council had been held and that it had been decided—mark you, decided—to insert in the Bill two entirely new pro-



visions, one providing for the permanent exclusion of the Six Ulster Counties and another cutting out of the draft Bill the provision for the representation of the Irish members in full force at Westminster during the transitory period, and I was given to understand in so many words that this decision was not put before me for the purpose of discussion or consultation, that the decision was absolute and final and the Right Hon. Gentlemen described themselves to me as messengers without any power or authority to discuss these questions in any way whatever with me, and they informed me that it was the intention of the Government to introduce a Bill containing these provisions, practically whether we liked it or not."

It was a somewhat heartless return for Mr. Redmond's services to his Liberal allies and (it may be unfeignedly added) to the Empire, and might well deserve an even more heated protest. Unfortunately in substance the same decision as to the permanence of Partition had been publicly announced by the Prime Minister in the House of Commons in his hearing more than a month before without a word of protest, heated or otherwise. Allowance may be freely made for the simple-heartedness with which the Hibernian leaders allowed themselves to be overreached by Mr. Lloyd George, and also for the fact that they had by this time parted with their power to eject from office a Coalition Government which could not have been formed without their unconditional consent. It was, however, not an altogether unfitting punishment of their own want of candour towards their trusting Irish countrymen.

Upon the point that the heads of settlement had all along agreed that the Six Counties should not be automatically included without the authority of a fresh Act of Parliament, Mr. Lloyd George stood firm. "The only thing that the Government said now and said all along was that this should be made clear



on the face of the Amending Bill. The rest was a dispute about words." He admitted that the heads of the settlement had been departed from to the extent that the Irish members were not to remain in full strength in Westminster beyond the term of the existing Parliament, but this was in deference to the Unionist members of the Coalition Cabinet who declared it would be impossible to get a single member of their Party to consent to maintain them in the Imperial Parliament after a General Election and after a Home Rule Government had been set up in Ireland. But until the General Election they would remain, both at Westminster and in the Dublin Parliament. What he understood from the member for Waterford was that he would not merely resist this modification but would resist the whole Bill. (Hibernian cheers).

"If that is the view of the Irish members," Mr. Lloyd George concluded, "of course, it would be idle for the Government to bring in a Bill for bringing Home Rule into immediate operation under any conditions. I deeply regret it. . . . I still believe that the Bill, even with these variations, would be a beginning of self-government and liberty for Ireland, and from the bottom of my heart I regret that my friends from Ireland cannot see their way to accept it. They, however, know their own country, its difficulties and conditions, and it is for them to decide. The Government ought not, and will not, force this proposal upon them."

Sir E. Carson's triumph was complete. Were they not playing with words, he asked, in talking about "permanence" in connection with the exclusion of the Six Counties? All the permanence that he could get or had demanded was that the Six Counties should be struck out by this Parliament. If any subsequent Parliament (he added with grim irony) desired to put them in, it would be open to them to do so. But there was one thing more, he proceeded to say:



“ Without going into the terms of the Memorandum, I made it perfectly clear that Departments would have to be set up in Ulster under the Home Office, or some Secretary of State here—Departments in every branch of government, from the judiciary down to the Post Office, and the different Departments which govern Ireland, and I made it quite clear upon the face of the document which is relied upon by the member for Waterford (the “ Headings of Agreement ”) that all these separate Departments were to be set up and that no officer or no Department which had anything to do with the new Irish Parliament was to have any jurisdiction whatsoever of an executive character in the Six Counties. Does any body suppose that that was set out on the face of the Memorandum as a matter that was merely to continue for a few months and that then these Six Counties were automatically to come in ? The thing would be ludicrous. You actually set up a whole system of new government at enormous expense in relation to the Six Counties, and then say that those Six Counties at the end of the war or at any time automatically were to come in. What would become of your Departments and your officers ? . . . Therefore the talk of this as provisional, if you mean by provisional that it was to stop and that the Six Counties were automatically to stop, and that the Six Counties were automatically to go back into the rest of Ireland, seems to me, on the face of the document, absolutely absurd.”

The Prime Minister, he triumphantly concluded, had said that the Six Counties could not be included without a new Bill and he stood by that agreement. Mr. William O’Brien, who followed Sir E. Carson, said it was plain that if Mr. Lloyd George had to some extent run away from the phraseology of the Memorandum, the member for Waterford and his friends had, under pressure from Ireland, run away from its substance, which was the agreement for



Partition. He made every allowance for the difficulties of the member for Waterford, but it did seem lamentable that it should have taken all but a second Rising in Ireland to convince him how dangerously the tide of indignation in Ireland was running against this proposal. He had apparently found no resource except to pick a quarrel upon any pretext with his own agreement, in the hope of extricating his friends and himself from their mess by pitiful hair-splitting about mere verbal distinctions between the original Memorandum and the Government's position to-night. "It was too late for the hon. and learned Gentleman either to recede or to advance. The one fact connected with this Memorandum to which the Irish people would attach the smallest importance was the fact confessed in the whole course of this debate, that a majority of their own representatives agreed to a separation from Ireland of six of her richest and most historic counties and of a fourth of the whole population of Ireland under conditions which nobody except a quibbler or a fool could represent as temporary or provisional."

In view of the forecast it contained of the course of events in Ireland during the following years and of the unscrupulous misrepresentation of the speaker's efforts from the start to avert a consent to Partition which proved to be fatal, some lengthier extracts from this speech may be forgiven, the more especially as it was suppressed or garbled by the Irish newspapers in their usual fashion :

"I really thought that we had heard the last of this miserable plea that the amputation of Ulster from the body of Ireland was to be a mere temporary or provisional operation. No man in Ireland can be any longer gulled by a statement of that kind. The whole point is this—that the Irish people have been asked to split our ancient nation into two antagonistic states, which are specially delimited with a view to collecting



into each of them the maximum of old religious and racial animosities. That is what the great majority of the representatives of Ireland bound themselves to do when they agreed to the terms of the original Memorandum. The Minister for War (Mr. Lloyd George) has repeated to-night what has happened as to the kind of Partition really contemplated. Lord Lansdowne's speech only brought to the test the system of deceit that has been going on in Ireland upon the subject for the past two years. The Irish people have been shamelessly assured that the moment the war was over, the Home Rule Act would come into force automatically for all Ireland. That assurance was given by gentlemen who heard the Prime Minister solemnly pledge himself that it could never be brought into operation without an Amending Bill and that any notion that Ulster could ever be brought into obedience to it by coercion was 'absolutely unthinkable.' The Minister for War has recalled to-night that, even before Lord Lansdowne spoke at all, the Prime Minister in this House announced that the Six Counties with three great Irish boroughs, should be definitely struck out of the Home Rule Act and that they could never be replaced except by a new Act of the Imperial Parliament. What does that mean? The member for Trinity College is the winner and could well afford to be in good humour when he pressed for no further guarantees as to permanence. He is not depending upon what have been called scraps of paper for his guarantees. We are told the original Memorandum did not guarantee to Ulster permanent exclusion. No, Sir, but did it guarantee to Ireland the contrary, that the exclusion would not be permanent? That is the marrow of the question—that that agreement would have left Ulster absolute mistress of her own future by the consent of both parties in this House. But the member for Trinity College has a still more solid guarantee, perhaps the



most solid guarantee of all. He has the guarantee of the representatives of Ireland who are prepared—‘temporarily’ and ‘provisionally,’ of course—to exclude Ulster and set her up as a separate State, with separate rights and interests and a separate form of government—and are pledged furthermore never to join in coercing Ulster to give up that privileged position. He has the guarantee practically speaking of this whole House, except our few selves, that no coercion of this kind can ever be attempted without a new Act of this House to force Ulster to come in. Need I say to any sane man listening to me that such an Act is about as likely as that this Imperial Parliament should pass an Act forcing the people of London to annex themselves to Germany? . . . It is our belief—and this is my answer to the member for Trinity College’s soft words—that if once Ireland were, by the votes of her own representatives, to accept her dismemberment, the mischief could never be undone except by a bloody revolution. I will not in this House make any attack upon the conduct of Irish members. This is not the proper venue. The proper and the constitutional course would have been to send them back to their own constituents—they have already exceeded their mandate by more than twelve months—send them back to their constituents and give the Irish people at least some voice in the most tremendous change that was ever proposed for our nation—upon an issue which is practically whether the Irish Nation is to take her life with her own hands. On the contrary, what is your proposal? In the original Memorandum, and even now, you promised to relieve these gentlemen for several years from any responsibility to their constituents, and I have a strong suspicion that one of the principal reasons for the breakdown of these negotiations is that the Government have not been able to extend that arrangement indefinitely. You may be ashamed of the scheme



now, but instead of the democratic and constitutional way of taking the verdict of the country, you proposed something that would really have staggered Pitt or Castlereagh. They only proposed to change the site of a Parliament from one country to the other, while you proposed to give to the same gentlemen a Parliament of their own in Dublin and to leave them members of this House as well, and that without submitting themselves to any judgment by public opinion in Ireland. Was there ever such a proposal? Your simple method of constituting an Irish Parliament—you democratic and Radical gentlemen—was to transfer seventy members of the Party who sit behind me from their Party room upstairs to some unburnt building in Dublin. Instead of taking the verdict of the country, you proposed to set these gentlemen up as a sovereign oligarchy over Ireland during a reign of at least two and a half years—men elected by nobody, but imposed by force upon their fellow countrymen, in spite of their indignation and abhorrence. And this caricature of a Parliament, nominated by this House, paid £400 a year apiece by the British Treasury—even if they are self-denying enough to refuse themselves any additional remuneration for their labours in Dublin—this is the beautiful experiment which you have begotten in Martial Law and will have to enforce by Martial Law. This is what you call making Ireland ‘a Nation once again!’ This is what you call fighting the battle of the Small Nationalities—by making Ireland a Nationality small enough already smaller still by robbing her of her richest province! This plot has broken down, I am glad to say, but it will never be forgotten, nor forgiven by the Nationalists of Ireland.

“Proposals of a very different kind have been made to the Government which would have appealed to the imagination of Ireland and of the United States. These proposals—I make bold to say in his presence—



would have gone nearer to the heart of the member for Trinity College, and they would have left Ireland an indestructible entity in a Federalist arrangement. It is too late to go back upon all that. The work, I am afraid, will now have to be left to other men, if not in other times. The real cause of the recent rebellion in Ireland was not Germanism or German gold. It was that you have driven all the best and most unselfish of the young men of Ireland to despair of the constitutional movement by your bungling, by your ignorance, by your doubledealing in this House and with the Irish members in reference to the Home Rule Act on the Statute Book, and finally by the savage methods by which you have for the last six months had your vengeance for the Rising. You have only succeeded in filling the hearts of multitudes of the best men of our race with a loathing for Parliamentarianism, British and Irish, and by an inevitable reaction from your subservience to one sectarian secret society you have raised up another and a more formidable secret society whose ideals, at all events, are pure and unselfish, and who have proved their courage to fight and die like men for these ideals. If the mutilated Dublin Parliament you would have set up under this agreement could have succeeded in anything it could only have been in re-establishing the evil ascendancy of that sectarian secret society which has been your undoing as well as ours. You would have had against you all the men who are teaching the young generation by their pens or in their schools and all those (and they are to be counted by hundreds of thousands) who are ready for any sacrifice of liberty or life for the old ideals of Irish Nationality and a United Ireland. Luckily for yourselves you have broken down in this plot for Partition. If you had proceeded, you could not have averted another rebellion and you would have lost perhaps for ever the key to the heart of National Ireland. You would have handed



over the future of Irish politics to the Irish Republicans and you would have brought us back to the days when the quarrel between Ireland and England was regarded as incurable and everlasting. Fortunately for England as well as Ireland, this particular Partition plot at all events is dead and damned to-night and millions of the Irish race will rejoice with all their hearts to-morrow at its failure."

Mr. Dillon, who spoke next, went out of his way, for some curious reason, to obtrude himself as the principal figure in the negotiations, which he admitted that "nobody in Ireland liked or pretended to like," and professed himself still willing to stand "by every word of the written document which we have;" he added in strange forgetfulness that if they "had the written document" in their possession, they had never up to this moment published the true terms of it to their own countrymen. For the rest, although he complained that "assurances were given to Sir E. Carson behind our backs which were never given to us," he omitted to attack the real culprits, who were the Home Rule Prime Minister and the Home Rule Secretary for War, and fell back on his old tiresome thesis that it was all the fault of the wicked Tory Lord Lansdowne. With a not too obvious logic, he complained that the Government had neglected to give the agreement "the only chance it had, which was to put it through Parliament hot-foot as a war-emergency measure after the Irish Party had obtained the consent of the Belfast Convention." In other words, that the English Government did not rush into law in 1916 the Partition Act of 1921, before the Irish people could have the smallest possibility of protesting, or even understanding!

Mr. Asquith, who wound up the debate, could only administer to Mr. Dillon the cold comfort of categorically repeating that Lord Lansdowne only repeated his (the Prime Minister's) own statement



“in the clearest terms in this House that there must be no coercion of Ulster and that the six excluded Counties should not be put back by any automatic process but only by an express Act of Parliament. There was no demur at that,” he added, with a significant gesture towards the Hibernian benches “and I felt entitled to assume that there was general agreement.”

At eleven o'clock the motion was suffered to be “talked out” without even the melancholy heroism of challenging a division. With the bargain for the Partition of Ireland, defeated though it was for the moment, perished the Home Rule movement of Parnell. The “Headings of Agreement,” endorsed by 75 of the 83 Nationalist representatives of Ireland, became the indisputable Magna Charta of Sir E. Carson’s Six Counties, and to that unhappy instrument must be traced the responsibility for all the years of disappointment, bloodshed and devastation that were to follow.



## CHAPTER XIX

A TALK WITH MR. BONAR LAW  
(1917)

MR. LLOYD GEORGE'S flirtations with the All-for-Ireland policy passed through three phases, each of them seemingly favourable to that policy, but all of them, whether through ignorance or design, fatal to a fair trial of its proposals. He was captivated by our concessions to Ulster, and proposed the Buckingham Palace Conference to discuss the only concession we declared to be inadmissible. He next invited us to contemplate with him the splendid phantom of an "Irish Provisional Government," and abandoned it to fall back upon a Partition Conference even more noxious than that of Buckingham Palace. No sooner had that manœuvre also come to grief than he now broached a proposal so like unconditional adoption of our programme of "Conference, Conciliation and Consent" that the mass of our own friends marvelled we did not at once embrace it with effusion. It in reality perverted our programme of a settlement to be sought by a small body of notables, acting under the control of a Referendum, into an unwieldy Convention of politicians discredited and detested by the country, and so constituted that it must ineluctably eventuate in Partition or in nothing.

Some months before he had committed himself to the new adventure, I made a last attempt to persuade him in what direction lay the true and only road of safety. It may be convenient to insert here my *précis* (made, as usual, at the moment) of an interview I had with Mr. Bonar Law on March 25th. He had complained, in plaintive terms, in the House of Com-



mons that no Irishman of any section came near him or the Government to offer any suggestion since the collapse of the "Headings of Agreement" negotiations in the previous summer. It may be recollected that when in my interview of May, 1916, with Mr. Lloyd George I suggested the advisability of waiting for six months of gentleness and appeasement in Ireland before attempting a settlement intended to last, Mr. Lloyd George foretold that "in six months the war will be lost, unless something is done at once." Nothing was done and the war was not lost, and although Mr. Wilson was elected to the Presidency in despite of England's grotesque intrigues to put Mr. Roosevelt in his place, Mr. Wilson was on the eve of throwing America's broad sword into the scale. He was, however, still hesitating, in view of England's cat-and-mouse play with Ireland, or we should probably have been importuned with no further languishings for an Irish Settlement. There was, consequently, still the imperious necessity that "something must be done at once" and this time we were dealing not with a subaltern but with a Prime Minister in the saddle for the great stakes of his life, and with a Chancellor of the Exchequer only less important, to whom as the second of the Triumvirate of which Sir E. Carson was the third, Mr. Lloyd George was indebted for his triumph over the easy unobtrusiveness of his late Chief. So long, therefore, as the faintest chance remained of turning to account the lesson taught by the discomfiture of the "Headings of Agreement" intrigues, I resolved that Mr. Bonar Law must not be allowed any right to complain of being left without a new insistence upon that advice, however unpalatable, of whose soundness the Ministry had received a telling confirmation. Of Mr. Bonar Law's own straight forwardness, courage and loyalty of character I had preserved an impression sufficiently warm to make communication with him a matter that required no finesse.



25th MARCH, 1919.

Saw B. L. in Downing Street at eleven o'clock. Told him I wanted nothing ; consequently my personality might drop out of the controversy. He expressed great readiness to hear proposals, saying he hoped I might take a more sanguine view than the last time. I said time had proved it was better to depress him than to mislead him. He said, it was, of course, an almost hopeless business. When I proceeded to read my proposals, prefacing them by saying their basis was that Partition in any shape was undiscussable and impossible, he at once broke in : " I am afraid anything would be quite impossible for Ulster except Partition. I am only now speaking for myself. I am to see George presently." I urged that, while the difficulty was now infinitely greater than it was a few years ago, the attempt to try concessions to Ulster had never been made, and things could not possibly be worse if the attempt failed. He intimated that C. and Craig were most willing but were certain they would be thrown over in Ulster and that Ulster would rebel the moment there was any attempt to bring them in. I said that that could only be a matter of prophesy which I for one utterly disbelieved. But why not bring matters to a test by proposing to Ulster some great scheme of concession approved by the most enlightened Irish Protestants, North and South, and then warmly recommended by the Imperial Conference ? He could not be got to explain what was the difficulty about trying. He fell back upon the same arguments in almost the same words he had used last year—the question of the two distinct races, etc. I pointed out it was not here a question of two races, but of three, and that the third (the Presbyterians) had been our steady allies up to a few years ago. That no difficulty had been found in the South in absorbing



the Normans, the Adventurers in Sir Walter Raleigh's time and the Cromwellians ; that as to the North the Protestants had as a matter of fact taken the lead in the two greatest Nationalist movements of a century ago—the Dungannon Convention and the United Irish movement in Belfast ; that if Unionists would only read the Unionist Lecky I would defy them to repeat there was any unbridgable gulf between the three races. He said the United Irish Movement was only a phase of the revolutionary movement in France, and that the Ulster Dissenters were still above all else democrats and would stand no subjection ; that the feeling among the gentry in Ulster was much more pliable, but that the workmen in Belfast would simply hear of nothing. He repeated a remark of his before that, to show how completely different the two races were, he had gone from Glasgow to Belfast, and it was exactly like being in the same city. I remarked that was very largely a mere question of accent ; that Devlin was almost unintelligible in the South for the same reason. His conclusion was so ill-founded that it was actually Scotch artisans imported from Glasgow that saved Devlin's seat. I read for him my proposals and suggestions as to the type of men who might form an Irish Conference. He said all would seem excellent, if we were dealing with reasoning beings, but we are not. I asked was not that giving up all hope between the two countries in despair and without even making a trial ? I said our people could not fight England, but they could worry the life out of her—twenty millions of them scattered through America Canada and Australia. Pointed out also that if the United States came into the war, they would insist upon a voice at the Peace Conference, and would make Plunkett's policy of Dominion Home Rule practical politics, and they would have Ireland's eyes turned from this Parliament to the Peace Congress. He said the sympathy of America with Ireland had



become less active of late years, and would be quite satisfied if Home Rule were granted to the parts of the country that desired it. I said he little knew American politicians, if he believed they would not be guided by Irish opinion, and the Irish in America far from being appeased, would be goaded to madness by any division of their country. I pointed out also that it was the hope of a peaceful Irish settlement alone that had for years tranquillised the Irish in America and reduced the Clan-na-Gael influence to as small proportions as the Sinn Féiners in Ireland until the collapse of Parliamentarianism gave them their chance ; that if they now found their moderation misunderstood, the consequences would be disastrous. He repeated that there was no use in arguing with the Ulster men ; Heaven only knew what might happen if their men came home from the war and found there had been any giving way. I reminded him that argument might apply with much more seriousness to the Nationalist soldiers from Ireland, England and the Colonies who were at least five times as numerous as the Ulster Unionists. He said although they had pledged themselves to make the attempt, he did not at all know whether they would not have to abandon it. He intimated that his own notion was to renew the proposal as to the six counties, with power to any county to join the Irish Parliament after five years, if there was a majority of even 5 per cent. in favour of doing so. That was practically last year's bargain, minus a possible reunion of Tyrone after five years.

I told him I believed as long as the world lasted, they could never get the Irish race to tolerate that, or any other form of Partition, and that there would be absolutely no section of Irishmen at their backs except the placehunters ; and no self-respecting Nationalist could ever raise his voice again for peace between the two countries ; that the universal impression would be that such a proposal would not be a genuine



attempt at a settlement, but only intended to throw dust in the eyes of the Americans in order to bring them in. We got talking over the general situation. I explained to him the difference between the Republican fighting party which I believed to be still comparatively small and the sentiment of Sinn Féin, which included the best part of the uncorrupted portion of the country. He said they had no leaders. I said in the sense of politician leaders that was true—that, if they had leaders of more acute political intelligence, the constitutional movement would by this time be reconstructed and be a greater force than ever and the Easter Week Rising would never have taken place. He said the fact appeared to be that nobody had any power at present of getting any settlement enforced. I agreed that that was lamentably true, but might be remedied if some great agreement by consent was once put before the country by Irishmen who were not professional politicians, and if in this way new men and younger men were attracted into the country's service ; but this could only be done if the Government pledged themselves to see an Irish settlement by consent resolutely through, no matter what any set of politicians did. Obstructionists could never face a General Election if we got thus far. He told me—one of my most important friends, had given him to understand that Redmond's party would come back from a General Election with no greater loss than 10 or at most 20 seats. This estimate seemed to have made a most unfortunate impression upon him. Electoral calculations are the morals of Ministers. I replied that it would be idle to prophesy in a state of anarchy such as now prevailed, but my own forecast was a very different one indeed. I could not see how more than ten of them could come back, even if the Bishops should deem it prudent to renew their doubled subscriptions in support of them. He asked what about the Bishops—did they really desire a Home



Rule settlement at all?—did they really want Catholics and Protestants to come together? I replied that I had no means of judging their inmost thoughts; I doubted whether they themselves quite knew where they stood; but if there was any foundation for the suggestion that they did not desire Home Rule, it was surely a good argument with Irish Unionists that their power in an Irish Parliament was not likely to be so overwhelming as they sometimes apprehended. Of one thing he might make quite sure—that not even Dillon's one fast friend among them, Dr.—— would ever publicly pin himself to any Partition proposal however plausible. We talked matters over for an hour and a half. He asked for my written proposals and suggestions for Conference, and said he was to see L. G. shortly after and would submit them.

To the end he seemed obstinately of opinion, it must be Partition or nothing; but spoke with great hopelessness of that and of the war, and as he accompanied me to the hall-door said it would perhaps be better to do nothing, if they would be satisfying nobody. I said better nothing than mischief.



## CHAPTER XX

MR. LLOYD GEORGE'S "IRISH CONVENTION"  
(1917)

MR. LLOYD GEORGE'S new expedient for the pacification of Ireland, and his last before he called in "the Black-and-Tans" was marked by his characteristic defects as a statesman. It was improvised, it was uncandid, and it was open to be changed into something quite different at a moment's notice. So open to change, that the new programme which he unfolded in a circular public letter to Mr. Redmond, Sir E. Carson and myself, contained two self-contradictory proposals for a "deal," one of which was dropped without a word of explanation, when the other was first mentioned in the House of Commons:—So sly as to raise the suspicion among plain men that it was not framed for Ireland at all, but as the only means of conquering America's last hesitation about entering actively into the war. For the main achievement for which his "Irish Convention" will be remembered was that the injunction to "go on talking" was elaborately kept up for eight months, until President Wilson made up his mind for his invasion of Europe, and the assembly of talkers was then quietly bundled out of notice.

The chances are that Mr. Lloyd George was neither so good nor so bad as he seemed from opposite angles. A politician whose main business it was to win the war, his first concern was to corral the Americans; but he would doubtless have honestly welcomed an Irish Settlement on its own merits, as a by-product—as, so to say, a Mesopotamian excursion



from his Flanders front. The first plan disclosed in his invitation to Mr. Redmond, Sir E. Carson and myself in May, 1917, was frankly a Partitionist one :— it was to revive the old “ Headings of Agreement ” and to put the Home Rule Act into operation forthwith in 26 counties, on condition of the remaining six being expressly excluded, a “ National Council ” of derisory powers being added by way of keeping up diplomatic relations between the two rival Irish States, in order to save the face of the Hibernian Partitionists. This scheme, it cannot be doubted, would have been closed with by Mr. Redmond, as he had closed with the “ Headings of Agreement,” had not the recent progress of Sinn Féin daunted the hearts of his Party. In the February of that year Count Plunkett, father of one of the leaders executed for his part in the Rising of Easter Week, had been returned for North Roscommon by a startling majority. Again a week before Mr. Lloyd George launched his new offer another leader of the Easter Week Rising, then in penal servitude, was returned by a narrow majority for North Longford, up to that time considered an impregnable stronghold of Hibernianism. Had the majority of 37 been turned to the other side, the first offer of the Prime Minister—that of Partition, naked and unashamed—would have been eagerly grasped at by the Hibernians, whose last chance of existence now depended upon getting hold of the power and revenues of their three-quarter Parliament before the rising tide should overwhelm them. But more intimidating than the figures at any individual election was the letter published on the eve of the polling from Dr. Walsh, Archbishop of Dublin—since the death of Dr. Croke, much the most influential Churchman in the political counsels of Irishmen—in which he made the memorable pronouncement that, to his knowledge, “ the cause of Ireland had been sold ”—a letter which, if it were published in time to reach the mass of the electors



must have turned the defeat of the Hibernians into a panic-rout. Mr. Redmond made no disguise of the fact that it was because he knew that "in my opinion it would find no support in Ireland," that he set aside in a sentence the first of Mr. Lloyd George's alternative schemes, and wished with all his heart it could be forgotten.

The second was more plausible and on a first inspection seemed to concede the main points the All-for-Ireland League had long been struggling for. It was that "a Convention of Irishmen of all creeds and parties" should assemble to draft a Constitution for their country, the only limitation imposed upon their powers being that it must be "a Constitution for the better Government of Ireland within the Empire," and the Prime Minister pledged the Government to carry into law any proposals of the Convention which might secure "the substantial agreement" of its members. What could look franker, more generous or more confiding? Many even of the most sober-minded of our own friends were transported with joy. Great was their amazement when, after much pondering, I felt compelled to decline the invitation to participate in a project which seemed to be the official adoption of the solution of the Irish problem by Irishmen themselves, and its enactment by the common consent of every English Party, which we had never ceased to press without giving way before outrage or ridicule. "Is not this the triumph of all you have been contending for?" it was impulsively urged. "What more can you desire?" Sore was the bewilderment when the reply came: "What alone I or you desire is an Irish Conference which shall have a chance of success. Constituted as Mr. Lloyd George proposes to constitute it, this Conference (or as he prefers to call it 'Convention') cannot possibly arrive at any agreement except one for Partition, and consequently what seems nominally a compliance



with our programme can lead to nothing except the certainty of defeat for all we have been striving for." The truth was that the apparent contradiction between the Prime Minister's two proposals was only on the surface. He gave up the first—that of undisguised Partition—for Mr. Redmond's brutally opportunist reason, that "the people would not stand it," thus nakedly stated; but he only gave it up to carry it more surely into effect by means of an "Irish Convention," overwhelmingly composed of pledged Partitionist politicians, "Nationalist" and Unionist, which must either agree to Partition, or disagree altogether, and thus throw the blame for a failure upon Ireland herself in the eyes of the Allied Powers.

All this is plain enough now, but was so little understood at the time by a public condemned to a carefully organised ignorance of the truth that it required some strength of mind to resist the temptation of a war-weary country to grasp at peace at almost any price. In the event, it was this Convention which led unavoidably to the Partition Act of 1920, with all the far-reaching calamities that followed it. Its history is therefore as absorbingly interesting as it is up to the present unknown. My own decision was not hastily taken. To Mr. Lloyd George's first invitation I made the following friendly reply:

" London, May 17th, 1917.

" Dear Mr. Lloyd George,—In reply to your letter of yesterday afternoon, I have no difficulty about giving for the information of the Cabinet the view of my friends and myself as to your Irish proposals. I have already repeatedly declared myself unalterably opposed to any scheme of Partition, and therefore need not discuss the suggestion for its revival in a Government Bill. As to the alternative suggestion for a Convention or Conference of Irishmen of all classes and creeds to draft a Constitution for Ireland, my



friends and myself are, of course, prepared to give a hearty support to the Government in giving effect to a principle we have so long contended for, subject to the discussion of details on Monday next.

Sincerely yours,

WILLIAM O'BRIEN."

"On Monday next" (May 21) when the Prime Minister laid his proposals formally before the House of Commons, he dropped altogether the offer to put the Home Rule Act into operation forthwith in the 26 counties, and he abstained from giving any detailed information as to the constitution of his "Irish Convention." In my remarks, accordingly, I extended a sympathetic, though necessarily guarded, welcome to that portion of his project, but could not avoid pointing out that Partition still lurked ominously in the background and warning the Government against any such composition of the Convention as might give rise to the suspicion that it was to be dominated by the nominees of Parties already committed by their adhesion to the "Headings of Agreement." The warning was made imperative by the speech of the leader of the Ulster Party, Sir John Lonsdale, proclaiming that Partition could be the only basis of the "substantial agreement" to which Mr. Lloyd George pledged himself to give legislative effect, and by the further speech of Mr. Redmond adumbrating a plan (which was subsequently adopted) by which the bulk of the Convention would consist of delegates from the Corporations and County Councils of Ireland—almost all partisans of his own—who had been allowed already, owing to the war, to outstay their mandate from their constituents by two years and who were so notoriously at variance with the new spirit in the country that, as soon as the country was allowed, it swept them bodily into oblivion. In the friendliest spirit, I urged our own conviction that success was to



be found, not in any large, unwieldy and unrepresentative assembly of partisans, but in a small group of ten or a dozen Irish notables commanding general respect, and depending for a Democratic sanction to their proceedings upon a proviso that any agreement of theirs must be submitted straightaway to a Referendum of the electorate of all Ireland. My observations wound up with a warning to which the course of subsequent events gave some significance :

“ What I want the House to mark is that you have never yet tried either of the measures I have suggested. You have never called the whole electorate of Ireland into consultation upon a definite scheme, agreed to by Irishmen commanding general confidence. You have never offered any concession to Ulster except one which would call upon us with our own hand to take the very life of our motherland as a nation. . . . If you break down now—I pray you not to delude yourselves—you will not kill the Irish Cause, but you will kill any reasonable chance for our time of reconstructing the Constitutional Movement upon an honest basis. You will kill all Irish belief in this House or in any Party within it. You will set up the right of Rebellion, whether for the Covenanters or the Sinn Féiners as the only arbiter left in Irish affairs. You will justly make Parliamentary methods even more despised and detested than they are at the present moment by the young men of Ireland.”

Once more the Government purchased the support of the Hibernian Party by following their fatal advice. It became known at once that the Convention was to be little better than a mob of Hibernian partisans, and its success—if its success, on any after basis but Partition, had ever really been desired by its projector—was about to be compromised from the start. Upon the following day, while there was still a hope of averting the utterly unconstitutional constitution now designed for the Convention, I willingly acceded to the



proposal of the Chief Secretary, Sir Henry Duke, for an interview upon the subject. My note of our conversation, taken down at the time, will best explain what happened between us :

May 22, 1917.

T. M. H. called to say Duke was anxious for an interview with me. Saw him after questions in his own room. He was profusely kind and even deferential. I said I had doubtless said a good deal last night that was disagreeable to him and his friends, but that it was one of our vices as a race, to be tempted to say things that they thought would be agreeable to strangers rather than to warn them of unpleasant realities. He said of course one was bound to face the facts and they were not cheerful. After a good deal of solemn peroration not coming to any particular point, he came to the real object of the interview. He first asked whether I had any suggestion to make as to the chairman of the Convention. I told him I did not think it mattered a farthing until he had first settled whether it was to be a big Convention or a small Conference ; for I was absolutely convinced the big miscellaneous gathering would end in a fiasco, with the result that especially after L. G.'s admission last night that this was not an Irish measure but a war measure, Irishmen would be sure to suspect that the object was to submit this question nominally to Irishmen under conditions they knew must fail, and then inform the Americans the blame lay on the Irishmen themselves. He shook his head and made various solemn gestures, but could only be got to say that so far as he and those immediately connected with him went there was certainly no design to pack the Convention so as to make it fail. I said nobody would suppose him guilty of so diabolical a plot as deliberately packing it, but they ought to know the Ulster Unionist Council would make Partition the first business of such a gathering and would if beaten withdraw, and that on



the other hand if the Redmondites were the kind of nominees of local boards R. suggested last night, they might in their desperation agree to some plausible scheme of Partition which would save the situation for the placehunters, but would be resisted by the country in a way that would never make it possible to assemble such a Parliament, in addition to all the other troubles that would be inevitable in a time of such intense popular passion. He made a statement which had a disagreeable ring intimating that the Government would take care that no violent persons would be among the nominees. I said that might only discredit the Convention altogether, even before it sat. He put to me the question would I be willing to take part in the Convention or at least ask my friends to take part? I replied that that was an hypothetical question—that before answering it I should want to know first in what spirit the Ulster Unionist Council would agree, if they agreed at all, to take part, and then how the Convention was to be constituted. He proceeded to give me particulars of the proposed constitution. First he said there was to be the substratum which was to be composed of the Chairmen of County Councils, Mayors of Corporations and delegates of other local representative bodies; next representatives of the Labour Councils and next of both orders of Teachers. I told him at once, as I had told him the previous night, that the first group of bodies would constitute it straightaway a packed Convention in the Redmondite sense; that the great majority of these bodies are Hibernian nominees, who owed to the Mollies their election and their titles as magistrates and innumerable other jobs for their relatives and themselves; that they repaid them with salvoes of votes of confidence in “the Party”; that these Boards had long exhausted their mandate and were so wholly out of touch with the present feeling of the country that they would lose their seats whole-



sale if they were obliged to face their constituents ; and that any decision founded on the votes of such men, most of them Partitionists, would be received with a shout of ridicule or indignation in the country. He made no attempt to reply, but said that was only the substratum. The next stratum was the clergy of all denominations. What they proposed was to ask the Bishops to select the priests who were most suitable and the same with the Church of Ireland and the Presbyterians. I said I was sorry to be obliged again to throw cold water, but the truth notoriously was that the priests were divided into two categories, the old priests and the young ; that the Bishops would inevitably choose the graver dignitaries, and leave out in the cold the young priests who sympathised with the Sinn Féiners, and who could easily rouse the country against the Convention. He agreed that this was so, but seemed to have no alternative. Finally, he proposed that the upper stratum, from which he hoped leaders that would direct the Convention in a wise way would develop, would consist of a certain small number of M. P.s chosen by each of the three Irish Parties, a small number of Irish peers, and a certain number whom the Crown reserved the right of nominating. In the beginning he mentioned with a knowing look : “ Enough has not been made of the provinces. After all the provinces are great historical divisions.” “ Yes,” I said, “ unfortunately the causes of great historical divisions.”

He returned to the question of the Chairmanship of the Convention on which he said everything might depend. I asked him to forgive me for pointing out that he was putting the car before the horse ; that he was rather thinking of small things about the Convention itself than of the possibility of an Agreement from any Convention so constituted, and that what he had told me had confirmed me in the conviction that from such a Convention nothing could be expected



except a breakdown or some partition compromise which the country would reject with fury. The only chance of success, such as it was, lay in following the precedent of the Land Conference. Then the landlords' official organisation—the Landowners' Convention—like the official organisation of the Ulster Unionists scoffed at the first proposal of the Land Conference and they by an overwhelming majority refused to take part in it. Dunraven appealed over their heads to the mass of the landlords, with the result of success and a warm vote of thanks from the Landowners' Convention to the Conference they had refused to join. In the same way we would appeal to the sense and interest of the bulk of the unofficial Unionists. If a satisfactory agreement was reached it should be submitted to the whole people of Ireland by Referendum and if accepted should be passed into law on the responsibility of the Government. Therein lies the one path to success instead of asking two of my friends to begin with a hopeless protest against Partition, in opposition to two bodies of politicians inexorably committed to it beforehand. D. listened with deeper interest, intimated there would be no difficulty about a Referendum and before we parted dropped the remark: "The Landowners' Convention passed a vote of thanks to the Land Conference. The Ulster Unionist Association may pass a vote of thanks to the new one." He asked me for my list of suggested Conference and suggested basis of settlement and asked me to see him again. I also insisted upon a Sinn Féin representative, suggesting either Griffith or John MacNeill if he and his brother prisoners were first released. He dropped a singular remark apropos of the Sinn Féiners—"We may have to fight them." I said: "If you do, God help you and all of us." He threw up his hands with a gesture of discouragement.

I find appended to this Memo. a note dated May 24, 1917:



As I was passing through the Division Lobby, on the second reading of the Franchise Bill to-night, Sir J. Lonsdale overtook me and agreed that if there was any chance at all, it would be through a small Conference. The bigger body, if it ever came together, was sure to be abortive. I urged him to make a final attempt, remarking : " I have no longer much personal interest in the matter, but, believe me, unless something can be done now, those who come after us will have reason to rue it." He said with very sincere feeling : " Whatever comes, you have fought for your country better than any other man in this House." Ronald McNeill came up as we were conversing, and said : " Are you converting William O'Brien, John ? " Lonsdale replied (again spoken with real feeling) : " No, O'Brien has very nearly converted me." McNeill said : " You were right in saying it would have been easy enough to pull things through five years ago." " It is a pity," I remarked, " you Ulster gentlemen did not then do more to help me." " You gave the answer in your own speech," he replied, " you were only 7 to 70. After the treatment you received yourself, how could you expect Ulstermen to put themselves under the heel of a man like Dillon who at a moment like this accuses us of being in conspiracy with a German spy ? " " Dillon would be a very unimportant man to-day," I said, " if you had taken a different course." " Anybody is good enough to stick a knife into an open wound," was his reply. While we were conversing, Birrell passed us like a spectre, looking so dreary.

Before we parted, the Chief Secretary asked me to supply him with the names of those likely to be found effective members of the Conference of Irish notables which I contemplated. I sent him the



subjoined panel, not as one to be rigidly adhered to, but as including types of the kind of Irishmen, high-minded, tolerant and representative of the finest Irish qualities, whose deliberations were likely to bear fruit :

1. The Lord Mayor of Dublin (Ald. O'Neill).
- 2 and 3. The Catholic and Protestant Archbishops of Dublin.
4. The Marquess of Londonderry.
5. The Earl of Dunraven.
6. Gen. Sir Hubert Gough.
7. Major William Redmond, M.P.
8. Viscount Northcliffe.
9. Mr. William Martin Murphy.
10. Mr. Arthur Griffith.
11. Mr. Hugh Barrie, M.P.
12. Professor Eoin MacNeill.

The list was drawn up without previous consultation with any of the individuals named, and would have then seemed to the general public a daring one ; but the prudence of the choice has so successfully borne the test of time that few would now dispute that had a dozen such men been brought together, when first suggested, several years before, or even then at the half-past eleventh hour, they would not have separated without arriving at a memorable National Agreement. Two of the Northern representatives suggested—Lord Londonderry and Mr. Hugh Barrie—were among the three Ulster representatives named on the Committee of Nine which brought the one gleam of hope that visited the proceedings of the Convention. Lord Northcliffe whom I had never met was at the time Mr. Lloyd George's closest confidant. His great paper was one of the most powerful of the dynamic forces that won the war. That his influence would not have been misused is clear enough from a note of his dated 30th April, 1917, on the occasion of a previous essay of mine in the same direction :



“ Dear Mr. O’Brien,—Your letter reached me to-day.

Curiously enough I was discussing this very matter with Sir Edward Carson yesterday afternoon. I do not believe that I should be a welcome member of any such Conference. I have been violently criticised in Ulster. But I do believe that an Irish Conference of strictly Irish people is one of the means towards a settlement. Very few English people understand Irish people. Yours very truly,

NORTHCLIFFE.”

Another singular success was the choice of General Hubert Gough. I had never met him or been in communication with him in any way. He was only known in Ireland as the leader of “the Curragh Mutiny,” and my suggestion of him as an apostle of National Peace would have been once grasped at by the malicious as an unheard of act of traitorism, and even by the worthiest would have been received with head shaking and silence. All I knew was that he had come of a gallant and genial line of Irish soldiers ; that the part he had taken at the Curragh would give him an indisputable title to be heard with respect in Ulster ; and that with a no less gallant and no less genial Irish soldier like Major “Willie” Redmond he would have supplied an irresistible soldierly argument for Irish peace. How true was my intuition may be judged by an extract from a letter General Gough wrote me years afterwards (February 13, 1921), when he first heard of the liberty I had taken with his name :

“ It was absolute news to me to find that you had mentioned my name as far back as May, 1917, as one of those who might arrive at some sane solution for the government of our unhappy country, and I must say how very broadminded I think it of you to have put forward such an idea. However much I may feel my own incapacity for dealing with such a question,



I can at least be confident that I would never have adopted the present bloody and repressive methods which are being so brutally employed in Ireland to-day. However, I do not suppose anything could have been devised to unite all Irishmen more closely and in more real sympathy. The terrible misfortune is that this real sympathy among Irishmen is being brought about by means which can only raise antipathy and hate between Irishmen and Englishmen. I can see no light at present and it is distressing to feel one is deprived of all power to alter things."

Mr. Duke left upon my mind the impression of a man convinced of the unwisdom of the proposed composition of the Convention, but powerless to alter it. One other auspicious opportunity offered of reconsidering the matter before it was too late. No sooner did the Government plans get abroad than the Sinn Féin Executive in Dublin passed a resolution unanimously rejecting Mr. Lloyd George's invitation to be represented by five nominees of Sinn Féin. Perceiving by the wording of the resolution that their decision applied to the outrageously unrepresentative character of the contemplated assemblage, and not to some more broadly conceived Irish settlement by Irishmen in Ireland, I at once telegraphed to Mr. Arthur Griffith, the founder of the Sinn Féin movement, and at that time (owing to the internment of Mr. De Valera and his chief fighting men in English prisons) the virtual leader and director of Sinn Féin affairs in Ireland :

" London, May 23.

" Confidential. May I ask does your objection to a big Convention bound to end in fiasco or Partition extend to a Conference of a dozen genuinely representative Irishmen whose agreement, if any, would be submitted to people of all Ireland by Referendum ? "

His reply was :



“ Dublin, May 23.

“ I should be willing to state my views to a Conference of Irishmen. Absolutely reject Convention.”<sup>1</sup>

Taking the offer to be one of moment, I communicated it without an hour's delay to the Chief Secretary, urging that it would ensure the participation in genuine Peace negotiations of the Irish Party of the future and expressing my own confidence that the co-operation of responsible men of the highest intelligence of the stamp of Mr. Griffith and Professor Eoin MacNeill would be found to be of priceless advantage. I did so, although I had just been hearing news which satisfied me that the Cabinet's mind was made up against us :

Hotel Windsor,

May 24, 1917.

Private.—

Dear Mr. Duke,—From all I hear, it is useless to hope to dissuade your colleagues from the so-called “ Irish Convention ” they have resolved upon.

I consider it, however, a duty to send you enclosed telegrams which passed between Mr. Griffith and myself yesterday. His reply proves that it would be still possible to secure the co-operation of the immense mass of Irish opinion represented, though very vaguely, by the sentiment of Sinn Féin.

All that, however, seems now given up, and I am afraid the great body of Irish Nationalists will be left no escape from the conclusion that the proposed Convention will be held for Anglo-American war purposes and upon lines which are bound to aggravate instead of composing the present troubles.

I shall be much obliged if you will kindly return me the suggestions as to the personnel and basis of

<sup>1</sup> It was stated by Mr. Michael Collins in 1922 that Mr. Griffith laid down conditions. He did not do so in any communication with me.



settlement of an Irish Conference on the Land Conference model, which I gave you on Tuesday.

Yours very faithfully,

WILLIAM O'BRIEN.

Rt. Hon. H. Duke, M.P.

P.S.—Mr. Healy has a suggestion for a preliminary “Conference” to draw up a programme for the “Convention,” if the Government still persists in having one. He, like myself, however, thinks it useless to persist in the face of the attitude of the Government.—W. O'B.

Mr. Duke's only reply—one of pathetic helplessness—was this :

“ Irish Office,  
25/5/'17.

“ Dear Mr. O'Brien,—I enclose, herewith, the two documents which you kindly entrusted to me.

Yours truly,

H. E. DUKE.”



## CHAPTER XXI

## TO TAKE PART OR NOT TO ?

SINN FEIN was thus ruled out of the programme of a Government which had to wait for the lessons of years of bloodshed and horror to appreciate the value of the patriotic offer which Sir H. Duke was compelled almost rudely to repulse. It is impossible to believe that Mr. Lloyd George had not the Griffith telegram before him when he shot his bolt defining the membership of his Convention in a way which he knew must render the collaboration of Sinn Féin and of the All-for-Ireland League impossible. He had made up his mind to cast in his fortunes with the Hibernian and with the Ulster Partitionists.

A characteristic stroke of the small politicians, British and Irish, followed. The Hibernian leaders, accustomed to rely upon petty Government doles and favours as a means of concealing their failure in great things and lost to all power of diagnosing the new spirit they were dealing with, came to the conclusion that their best hope of rehabilitating themselves with the country, and, in the cant of the day, of "creating a friendly atmosphere" for "the Irish Convention" was to advise an Amnesty for the Sinn Féin internees. Accordingly, when an evening or two afterwards I went over to Dublin, to make a last effort with Sinn Féin before announcing my own decision as to Mr. Lloyd George's invitation, it was to see Mr. De Valera and his interned fighting men—some four thousand of them—flocking over by the Holyhead boat to the frantic joy of a country that not unnaturally received them as conquerors. Be it remembered that up to



that time the Irish Republic had no existence of any kind, even in name. The utmost length to which the first Sinn Féin Convention of five hundred delegates in Dublin in the early part of 1916 went was a resolution: "That we proclaim Ireland to be a separate nation"—as Mr. Lloyd George did a few years afterwards. Neither Count Plunkett's election for North Roscommon, nor Mr. McGuinness' for North Longford had been fought on the Republican issue. It was not until a few days after his return to Ireland from his English prison that Mr. De Valera for the first time made the Irish Republic the electoral touchstone of the future. Any other programme had now, however, been wiped off the slate by Mr. Lloyd George's own hand. When Mr. Griffith did me the favour of calling upon me at the Shelbourne Hotel, the streets outside were throbbing with the rejoicings for the returning fighting-men. With all Mr. Griffith's moral courage—and it was dauntless—there was obviously no more to be said for peace. The Amnesty which must have followed as a matter of course once a genuine National agreement was arrived at, was now justly despised as a mere Hibernian electioneering trick. Its only effect was to convince the Irish people—even those who were most reluctant to own it—that the fighters of the Easter Week dispensation were the only men to deal with shifty British Ministers. Sinn Féin in its most militant shape was rooted more firmly than ever as the best hope of a country which had already irrevocably sentenced Parliamentaryism to die the death.

Not for the first, nor the tenth time, Mr. Lloyd George failed to see the "fundamentally right" thing and did the obviously wrong one. No sooner was the composition of the Convention disclosed than it became evident it must end in Partition or throw the blame for its abortiveness upon Ireland. Of the 101 members 80 at the lowest estimate were Partitionists



of the Hibernian Party or of the Orange Party. The representation accorded to the political parties—5 delegates apiece to the Hibernian Party, the Ulster Party and Sinn Féin, 2 to the All-for-Ireland League and 2 to the Irish Labour Party—was on the face of it a perfectly fair one. It in reality covered a gross deceit. The Hibernian Party, with a nominal representation of only 5, obtained some 70 representatives through the Mayors of Corporations and the Chairmen of County Councils and District Councils, nearly all the direct nominees of the Board of Erin; the Ulster Party, technically restricted to 5 representatives, numbered 20 at the least through the delegates from the Unionist County and District Councils and the nominees of the Crown. These two Parties combined, counting a majority of something like 8 to 1 of the entire body, were publicly committed to a Partition agreement if there was to be any at all. Into this Partitionist sea, the five Sinn Féiners and the two All-for-Ireland representatives were to be precipitated, *rari nantes in gurgite vasto*, with whatever help they might receive from four known opponents of Partition who were included among the direct nominees of the Crown. Worse remained behind. Sir E. Carson, the only person who could operate any change of front from the Ulster side, held personally aloof from the Convention, and the participation of his Party was made expressly subject to the condition that their five representatives at the Convention were to agree to nothing without first obtaining the approval of the Ulster Unionist Council—an extern body of the Covenanters' staunchest extremists—who were not to figure publicly at the Convention at all, but were to act as a Black Cabinet to revise or veto any agreement, even if recommended by their own Parliamentary representatives. The Convention was thus to be a collection of puppets, of which it was to be Sir E. Carson and his Ulster Unionist Council who were to pull the strings.



After Mr. Redmond's death, Lord MacDonnell, in a letter to the *Times* mentioned that the Irish leader had confided to him that he would never have entered the Convention if he understood at the time that this was to be the arrangement. If he was unaware of it, it must have been because he failed to notice either the resolution of the Ulster Unionist Council making the stipulation regarding their veto in the most distinct terms, or my own reply to Mr. Lloyd George (dated June 18, 1917) in which I made this fatal flaw in the constitution of the Convention one of my principal reasons for declining to nominate representatives from the All-for-Ireland League: "On the other hand, while my friends and myself would welcome the most generous representation of the unofficial Unionist population of Ireland, the Government scheme ensures to the official Ulster Unionist Council a full third of the voting power of the Convention, under the direction, moreover of a Committee not present at the Convention, but specially nominated by the Council to supervise its proceedings from outside. The terms of the Resolution under which the Ulster Unionist Council consented to enter the Convention make it clear they have only done so as a war measure, and relying upon the assurances of the Government that they need fear no Parliamentary pressure if they should adhere to their demand for the exclusion of the Six Counties as a minimum—a demand, indeed, which was conceded to them last year by the Irish Parliamentary Party. It is consequently obvious that the chances of any agreement by the Ulster Unionist Council other than one based on the separation of the Six Counties are all but hopelessly handicapped from the start, and the temptation dangerously increased to those Nationalist politicians who have already committed themselves to dismemberment."

If this were not a sufficient proof how complete



would be the veto of Ulster, any possible doubt on the subject was removed by a candid statement in the House of Commons from Mr. Bonar Law, in which the man who was next to Mr. Lloyd George, if even second to him, the most important member of the Ministry, pledged himself that the assent of Ulster would be regarded as indispensable to the "substantial agreement" in the Convention on which the Prime Minister undertook to legislate. Mr. Redmond's own want of foresight was, therefore, alone to blame if he was not warned in good time that nothing could come from the Convention unless with the consent of the Ulster Unionist Council, and that consent, he already knew, was only to be had by reviving the old pact for the separation of the Six Counties. Notwithstanding these conclusive warnings that the Convention must end either in Partition or in abortiveness, a perfect torrent of entreaties was for the next month poured upon my head from all sorts of worthy peace lovers, imploring me to make the All-for-Ireland League a consenting party to the imposture. On 13th June the Prime Minister addressed to me in cordial terms an invitation "to nominate two representatives of the Party under your leadership to serve as members of the Convention." My reply, dated June 18th, expressed "with deep disappointment" my conclusion that "while the Government have nominally adopted the principle of allowing the constitution of Ireland to be settled by agreement among Irishmen, they have done so under conditions which must render that principle a nullity. There can be little or no hope that a Convention constituted as the Government have directed can arrive at any agreement except some hateful bargain for the Partition of the country under some plausible disguise." I admonished him that "to attribute the blame for such a decision or for the failure to arrive at any better one to the unrepresented Irish people would be little



short of an outrage upon Ireland and would be a gross imposition on the credulity of friendly nations abroad," and intimated that under the circumstances "I have made up my mind with reluctance, and indeed with poignant personal sorrow, that I must decline to undertake any responsibility in connection with a Convention so constituted."

Sir Horace Plunkett, who was to be the Chairman of the Convention, did me the unusual honour of addressing to me two public letters couched in terms of high courtesy asking me to reconsider my decision, adding that, in his belief "if you could see your way to come in, you would bring a good many more than your own immediate followers." In my reply, I pointed out that in his letter he had forgotten "the objection which is the most fatal of all—namely, that at least 90 of the 100 members of the Convention will be the nominees of the two Irish parties of politicians who only last year came to an agreement to form six Irish counties into an 'excluded area' to be separately administered through departments responsible only to an English Secretary of State under an arrangement which could never be terminated without a new Act of the Imperial Parliament." My colleagues and myself had made it known that we were ready to go into the Convention to resist Partition against all odds, "if the august body of Bishops, Catholic and Protestant, who signed the recent manifesto, saw fit to delegate to the Convention representatives of their Order as to whose 'unrelenting opposition to Partition, temporary or permanent' (to use the Bishops' own words) the bulk of the Convention could be left in no possible doubt," but I was obliged to add: "Unhappily their lordships have decided in a sense which has given rise to grave misunderstandings and for reasons which this is not the time to discuss but which have not lessened the anxieties of patriotic Irishmen." To Sir Horace's gentle reproach that, in refusing to



participate, I was "casting off the mantle of National Unity," which had so long been mine, my reply was :

"Our small band have fought, not for a contemptible verbal victory, but for a practical agreement which would make Irishmen of all parties and creeds willing partners in the government of an undivided Ireland, and while nominally pursuing that object, the organisers of the Convention have so loaded the dice that, short of a miracle from Heaven, the only agreement likely to be arrived at is one for the permanent division of Ireland among the place-hunters of both factions."

But his letter seemed to open one avenue by which our participation might still be possible. He made it an "essential point" that an agreement by the Convention should be "submitted for popular approval by Referendum or otherwise," and intimated that this "would unquestionably" be done. "If he made this statement on official authority" I answered, a Referendum would still leave it possible for us to take part. Sir Horace Plunkett, in his second public letter, avowed that "unfortunately, I have no authority to make any official person responsible for the statement, but I did not speak without having the best of reasons for believing that what I said was true. If, I am able to give you my authority later, I will gladly do so." The "later" announcement of his authority was never made, and so that avenue to the reconsideration of our decision was closed as well. Manifestly, with Sir Horace as with myself, the Chief Secretary had inclined towards a Referendum for all Ireland, but was promptly put in his place by those who had Sir E. Carson to satisfy. A Referendum for all Ireland was now and had always been the terror of his life.

For all that, the most trusted of my own advisers began to waver, under the influence of that cry of "Peace!" where there can be no peace which some-



times sweeps over Ireland with the weird pathos of a Banshee. With, perhaps, the most influential of them all, for his breadth of judgment, Lord Dunraven, I had been compelled to differ on Conscription, although with a respect for one another's different points of view which was never diminished for an hour on either side. "I agree with you," he wrote, on the first disclosure of the Constitution. "If Redmond's majority can come to any agreement with Lonsdale, they can carry it. What I fear is some agreement involving carefully concealed Partition": but he eventually yielded to the argument that our absence would let judgment go against us by default, and accepted for himself the invitation of the Crown. I suspect that Mr. Healy's preference inclined in the same direction, although with the loyalty in which he never failed throughout these soul-trying years, he forbore to say so.<sup>1</sup> Mr. William Martin Murphy, the proprietor of the most widely circulated of the Irish newspapers, *The Independent*, had been all along a convinced believer in the policy of the All-for-Ireland League, but to Ireland's heavy loss he hesitated to enforce his opinions in his paper, acting, as he told me more than once, on the advice of Lord Northcliffe: "Never come out strong until you've first got your circulation; once your circulation is there, you can say anything you like." His first impression of the Convention was my own:

"Dartry, Dublin,  
28th May, 1917.

"Dear Mr. O'Brien,—I agree with you about the danger of Partition. Bonar Law's reply to Ronald McNeill has turned the Convention which was intended as a trick into a farce. The Ulsterites will be able to say: 'Heads I win, tails you lose.'

<sup>1</sup> Had I his leave to publish them, Mr. Healy's letters, teeming with diamondiferous wit, and laden with piquant items of secret information, would make a valuable addition to the inner history of the time.



After Partition is repudiated by four-fifths of Ireland, it is to be set up again at the Convention. My present feeling is to advise that the whole scheme should be ignored until Lloyd George repudiates Bonar Law's promise to the Ulsterites.

I think I will write to Northcliffe and tell him that all confidence in the bona fides of the Convention was knocked on the head by Bonar Law's statement. It is evident that he expected some question from Dillon to which he referred.

Sincerely yours,

WM. M. MURPHY.

Wm. O'Brien, Esq., M.P.,  
Bellevue, Mallow."

Later on, however, Mr. Murphy confessed he was a little shaken by the disgraceful cry that his object was to wreck the Convention, with which he was assailed in public and in private. He now wrote that "I have no doubt whatever the three of us" (Mr. Healy, himself and myself) "would dominate the show with the combinations which I think could be got together and the fear of public opinion outside acting on the Co. Council Chairmen," and he too ended by accepting the invitation of the Chief Secretary, adding: "If I cannot do any good there, I may be some check to those who would do mischief."

One of the entreaties it was most difficult to resist was a secret message I received (June 26) from a member of the Cabinet for whom I entertained a sincere respect, and the difficulty of resistance was all the greater that the message came through one whose single-minded services as an intermediary in the highest quarters were of priceless value to Ireland throughout these years, although they were rewarded with the usual brutal injustice by Irish politicians. This was the communication of the Minister to my excellent friend:

"Go over and see O'B.; don't give him messages



from me direct ; but move him. I know so much more than he can know of the North East people. I know how hard and almost impossible it is for them to confer with R. or he with them. . . . O'B. has got very near the Northerners. He, if anyone can bridge the last gap. Will he not do it ? If he knew all that is in the wind and how much importance attaches to his attitude he would."

It can scarcely be necessary to accentuate the historical value of this testimony from a Cabinet Minister of exceptional authority with "the Northerners," both as to the transformation our conciliatory labours might have wrought in them, had we received even common toleration from our own side while there was still time, and as to the evil effect on the mind of "the Northerners" of the Hibernian ascendancy. It was too late to think of all this except with a sigh. In an Hibernian-ridden and an Orange-ridden Convention, neither we, nor, as it turned out, the sober Conciliationist Northerners could do anything but wring our ineffectual hands in presence of an artificially constructed majority whose programme was : "Either Partition or nothing."

My friend received my answer with sorrow, most gently and most diffidently expressed ; but his next communication contained a startling confirmation of my prognostication that Partition, in even a more offensive form than I had suspected, was up to that time the settled purpose of the projectors of the Convention :

"The forces that are gathering in this connection are very interesting and complicated and frankly not to my liking. I will throw out the idea as I get it from very high up. There is a lot being said about a Federal Commission, and the idea is not merely Home Rule all round but *Partition all round*—that England is to be broken up into two States, Scotland, two ; Ireland, two, and Wales one ! Then also it is believed



that Smuts and Borden have dealt a death-blow to Empire Federation ; that what we are asked to work on now is a lot of local Federal Units—the B. Isles, Canada, Australia, S. Africa, N. Z.—and that these scattered federations are to be loosely united under the Crown in what I suppose will be called a ‘ Confederacy of States.’ . . . I feel that the issue—that a score of vast issues—whether they emerge for better or for worse hangs on the toss of a coin.”

My indomitable friend worked on for a manageably-sized Conference as the true remedy, but reported : “ No, their minds run on big battalions and noise ! They think that a small Convention will be described in the U. S. as ‘ hole and corner,’ and that the columns given to it over there will be indirect proportion to what Jones of Nevada used to call ‘ base Roman numerals ’ ” ; he struggled for at least a Referendum of all Ireland and could only get as far as dim understandings that the Convention itself might order a Referendum — a Referendum which, *ex hypothesi*, would be one to destroy their own guilty (but successful) conspiracy ! They were still harping on “ the U. S. and the big battalions and noise ! ”

Finally, on the eve of the sitting of the Convention, the Prime Minister came to the charge once more, in a manner probably without a precedent in the usages of Prime Ministers, by addressing to me a second public letter (dated from Downing St. 20th July) asking me would I not withdraw my refusal ? He had nothing better to offer than these anodyne generalities : “ The Convention is a sincere effort to see if Irishmen in Ireland can agree on a settlement which will make for better relations between the different parties in Ireland and happier relations between Ireland and Great Britain. With the object in view, I know that you are in full sympathy, and I most earnestly hope that you will respond to this appeal, which I understand, has come also from many



other quarters, to give your help toward securing the success of the Convention."

The controversy was wound up in a letter in which I repeated that "the type of Convention selected by you defeats its stated object with fatal certainty by leaving the great mass of Nationalist opinion all but wholly unrepresented and conferring the power of decision upon a majority of politicians who have notoriously lost the confidence of the Irish people," and begged of him to persevere no further with a Convention hopelessly out of touch with Irish public opinion, but to fall back upon a friendly conference of the most potential friends of peace in all parties as the only means—a forlorn one enough by this time—of finding a way out.

Unluckily this latter advice was now a counsel of perfection. An event had just happened which put an end to the last chance of negotiating otherwise than with weapons of steel. At the battle of Messines on June 7th, Major "Willie" Redmond, like the "vera parfait, gentil knight" he was, insisted "on going over the top" at the head of his men and met his death. His only complaint, we may be sure, was that he could but repeat the dying cry of Sarsfield at Landen: "O that this were for Ireland!" For his constituency in East Clare, Mr. De Valera offered himself as a candidate on the straight issue of an Irish Republic. The Hibernians made a supreme effort to rehabilitate their fortunes and, what, with the sympathies enkindled by the young soldier's fate, the high expectations created by the Convention, and a candidate of widespread local influence, they were fatuous enough to count upon an easy victory. To their stupefaction, the Irish Republic carried the day with a majority of five thousand votes. Had the figures been reversed, a Partition scheme must have been carried through the Convention with not more than half a dozen dissenting voices. East Clare put



an end to the danger of the Convention coming to a criminal agreement for Partition, but it was only to create a new danger—for the uprising of the Republic forbade the possibility of any other agreement, since if it were to meet acceptance by the country in its present mood, it would not have the smallest chance of acceptance either by Ulster or by the British Parliament. The Irish people are too ready to make idols and too ready to break them. It was by men too little known to excite either idolatry or animosity that the ways were to be in the long run straitened out. But for the next four years, at all events, Mr. De Valera, with his Republican Tricolour, was the National idol, and Mr. Griffith and his peaceful penetrationists were laid up in lavender. The presence of Sinn Féin at an amicable Conference-table was no longer practical politics. Elated with what seemed the cleverness of a paltry electioneering dodge, Mr. Lloyd George and his Hibernian counsellors released Mr. De Valera and established the Irish Republic.



## CHAPTER XXII

## THE DEATH OF MR. REDMOND

NONE the less, the joint Convention of the Hibernians and Covenanters assembled in Dublin on July 25th, amidst decorative surroundings that might well give a good-natured people like the Irish the impression that some great work of peace was on foot. The Convention held its sittings within the historic walls of Trinity College amidst the finest stage scenery the genial Provost, Dr. Mahaffy, could provide ; a President of respectable neutrality was found in Sir Horace Plunkett ; not a few single-minded Irishmen, with a nobler gift for peace and goodwill than for the mean realities of politics, were induced to join in attempting to elevate the assembly above the normal manœuvres of the politicians ; for months the country was permitted to hear of nothing but patriotic junketings and speeches, "passed by the Censor," overflowing with the raptures of "the Black Northerns" at the discovery of the charms of "the Sunny South," and corresponding responses from the Sunny South to the advances of the dour men of the Black North—all purely for exportation to "the U. S." As a precaution against any premature disclosure of the truth, the business meetings of the Convention were held in private, and any report of their secret sittings, any comment or even any "reference" to them in speech or newspaper was declared a crime under the Defence of the Realm Act. The impatience of the country was sought to be allayed by not over-candid assurances from Sir Horace Plunkett in his banquetting speeches from time to time that all was going well. "The



U. S." had to be kept amused by such romantic scene-painting and by the band for many months before the curtain could finally be lifted and then only to exhibit the actors scurrying off the stage, like as many poor ghosts at cockcrow. The realities of the drama were going on in America itself, where England was playing for the soul of President Wilson. In the Ireland of real life the Volunteers were silently arming and drilling their battalions, paying but a contemptuous attention to the love-feasts of the politicians in Mr. Lloyd George's "Irish Convention."

Those who may have the curiosity to dip into the musty volumes of shorthand notes of the secret sittings will find that week after week, and month after month passed without any attempt to grapple with the real problem, which was to win over Ulster without Partition. Plenty of patriotic platitudes and overflowing, but the most studious determination on both sides not to come to business. It is one of the curious ironies of history that almost every speech at these secret sessions was one that might have been delivered from an All-for-Ireland platform any time for the five previous years. They were speeches of eager longing for the co-operation of Irishmen of every class, creed and racial origin; no longer a whisper of those exhortations to give "a dose of the old medicine" to "our hereditary enemies," the "rotten Protestants," and "the blackblooded Cromwellians" with which Hibernian oratory had for melancholy years resounded, Ah! welladay! had all these tardy speeches of abashed Hibernians and patriotic Southern Unionists of the Lord Midleton stamp only been delivered in the light of day and a few years before, how differently contemporary Irish history might have been written!

The explanation of the amorphous condition of the Convention was only too simple. A Partition Agreement could have been at any moment struck up by an overwhelming majority if the Hibernians could have



plucked up courage to hark back to their Party's surrender of the Six Counties more than a year before. But the mobbing of Mr. Redmond outside Trinity College on the opening day, and the mobbing of Mr. Redmond and Mr. Devlin again in Cork (which was the only notice the young men deigned to take of their proceedings)—above all the recollection of the message of doom from East Clare, kept alive by the hints the unrepresentative majority were receiving every day of their lives of the indignation and contempt of their constituents—completely daunted the mass of the County Councillors and Town Councillors from following their Parliamentary leaders an inch further on the road to Partition.

When after five months' barren deliberations, the word was passed, now that "the U. S." was squared, that the Convention must somehow finish up, they found their heads bumped against a stone-wall, and could discover no way through it or over it except one which strikingly confirmed those who had urged a small Conference of Notables as the only practical means of working out a Settlement by Consent. What happened deserves to be recalled from the oblivion to which the rest of the proceedings of the Convention were deservedly condemned. The only approach to business of any kind they found practicable was to suspend the operations of the Convention proper altogether and to delegate their powers to a "Committee of Nine." It was excellent, or rather it would once have been. They forgot that their Committee of Nine was subject to two disabilities from which our Conference of ten or a dozen notables would have been free. They sat without any representative of Sinn Féin—that is to say of the only organisation which could speak for five-sixths of the Nationalists of the country; and the representatives of Ulster on the Committee of Nine were not free agents, but the nominees of an outside Orange tribunal, the Ulster



Unionist Council, without whose imprimatur any agreement of theirs must be valueless. The practicability of the one plan, and the impracticability of the other were demonstrated in a still more remarkable manner. Two of the three representatives of Ulster on the Committee of Nine—Lord Londonderry and Mr. Hugh Barrie, M.P.—were actually two of those I had suggested as fit and proper persons in my Memo. to the Chief Secretary. They justified the confidence in their conciliatory temper and large-mindedness so well that, whenever the secrets of the council-chamber come to be revealed, I have the best reason to know it will be found that the three representatives of Ulster (the third being a lawyer of enormous influence in the North, Mr. McDowell) so long as they were left free to act on their own judgment, collaborated cordially with the remainder of the Committee of Nine in formulating an agreement which under happier stars might have developed into a benign National Settlement. But under the constitution of Mr. Lloyd George's Convention, the three Ulster representatives were made cyphers in their own province. No sooner had they submitted their conditional agreement to Sir E. Carson's occult Vigilance Committee, who were the real masters of the Convention, than their partiality for any agreement other than Partition was pitilessly snubbed, and the Committee of Nine was doomed to barrenness and failure as had been the plenary Convention.<sup>1</sup>

A rebuff like this ought in all honesty to have been the signal for the dissolution of the Convention ; but

<sup>1</sup> It is worthy of remark that Mr. Ronald McNeill's book, *Ulster's Stand for the Union*, carefully suppresses any mention whatever of the "Committee of Nine," who arrived at the only genuine all-round agreement produced by the Convention. The suppression is all the more significant that the author tells us : "My friend, Mr. Thomas Moles, M.P. (the official Ulster Secretary of the Convention), took full shorthand notes of the proceedings of the Convention, and he kindly allowed me to use his transcript."



they " kept on talking " for other weeks and months to come, until America was duly afloat for the scene of war, and a number of worthy men who had been formed into Sub-Committees gravely pursued their investigations into the Land Purchase question, and the Irish Mines and Minerals question, and administered good cheer to weak minds by propounding a pious opinion against Conscription. The only affectation of real life left to the Convention was the attempt of Mr. William Martin Murphy, after the Committee of Nine had been reduced to nothingness, to wind up the Convention to a declaration for Dominion Home Rule. Quite a hopeless enterprise, it is true, and one, curiously enough, in which he was obstructed with persistency by the Chairman, Sir Horace Plunkett, who later on was to found a Dominion Home Rule League all his own, as though he were the original patentee of the specific, but who now (as Mr. Murphy more than once confided to me) engineered the latter out of every endeavour to submit the subject squarely to the Convention. The iron will of Mr. Murphy, which did not bend before " Jim Larkin " when his tyranny was at its height, was not to be easily broken. Standing alone in the beginning in an assembly which did not love him, his stubbornness was not long in securing the adhesion of the two most formidable men in Mr. Redmond's Hibernian majority. The time had come when no Hibernian durst whisper " Partition " above his breath. Mr. Devlin must have become sensible already that he had got down at the wrong side of the fence. He never afterwards quite forgave Mr. Dillon for the unlucky lead which induced the Hibernian Grand Master to stake his future as the prime mover of the Belfast Convention at which he had succeeded in thrusting the Partition agreement down the throats of the Nationalists of the Six Counties. He now made a desperate attempt to refill the sails of his popularity by joining Mr.



Murphy and proclaiming himself for nothing short of Dominion Home Rule. His example was imitated, or more likely dictated, by Dr. O'Donnell, the Bishop of Raphoe, who had long been the most ambitious politician in the ranks of the Hierarchy. It was he whose patronage gave the Board of Erin wing of the Ancient Order of Hibernians its first foothold in Ireland, and he, too, who took a principal part in establishing its supremacy as the real governing power in Ireland. His Lordship had realized earlier than some of his venerable Brethren that Partition was no longer a viable policy, at least in the North. During the last months of the Convention he, like Mr. Devlin, transferred his allegiance to the Dominion Home Rule programme of Mr. William Martin Murphy, and left Mr. Redmond in a state of tragic isolation.

The story is a pitiful one of desertion by the Hibernians and a fresh act of faithlessness by Mr. Lloyd George. He had already been guilty of one breach of faith with the Convention. He pledged himself at the outset to carry into law any decision which might secure a "substantial agreement" among its members. He afterwards sat dumbly by while Mr. Bonar Law in his name cancelled that pledge by announcing that any "substantial agreement" must include the Ulster group to be of any avail. The Prime Minister was now to commit a still more impudent breach of the undertaking on which the Convention was brought together. The Government, he stated in the House of Commons, proposed to summon the Convention "to submit to the British Government a Constitution for the future government of Ireland *within the Empire*." No sooner was it reported to him that Mr. Murphy's push for Dominion Home Rule was making formidable progress among Mr. Redmond's Hibernians than on February 25th, 1918, he wrote a public letter addressed to Sir Horace



Plunkett, repudiating the freedom of the Convention to frame what Constitution it pleased "within the Empire," and declaring categorically that the British Government must in any event reserve Customs and Excise, which was the quintessence of the fiscal freedom of the Dominions.

The blow was well calculated to break up the last hope of uniting even Mr. Redmond's majority in any National Agreement worth the cost of printing it. A majority for Dominion Home Rule would have been a purely platonic performance in any case, since "substantial agreement" even of the friendly Southern Unionists, not to speak of the Northerners, was out of the question; Mr. Lloyd George's new breach of faith, ruling Customs and Excise out of the discussion, shattered the Hibernian block itself into smithereens, between those who adhered to Mr. Redmond, and those who deserted to Mr. William Martin Murphy. Lord Midleton and his Southern Unionists were willing to join Mr. Redmond in a compromise by which Excise would be conceded at once to the Irish Parliament and Customs would be temporarily reserved—a compromise which Mr. Lloyd George would, no doubt, have gratefully closed with.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Redmond's conclusion would seem to have been that a division in which the Southern Unionists and the Nationalists of every hue would be found voting together for a large measure of freedom for an undivided Ireland would at least be a more creditable end for a Convention in any event doomed to be an abortive one, than a catchpenny minority vote for a full Dominion Home Rule, rejected beforehand by the Prime Minister and frankly despised by the country. The resolution, in which his final effort for a united decision was to be made, substantially asked the country to go back to

<sup>1</sup>How unimportant the point in dispute was may be judged from the official return of revenue of the Irish Free State, which is in the proportion of £2,000,000 Customs to £14,000,000 Excise.



the Policy of Conciliation from which he had been driven, sorely against his own balanced judgment, by the revolt of Mr. Dillon and the *Freeman's Journal* against the Land Conference Settlement. But the union of Irishmen of all schools and classes which would have been the most practicable of practical politics then was by this time fatally forbidden by the uprising of the Hibernian ascendancy and by the alarms of an armed Ulster whose worst passions that ascendancy had kindled from ashes into a blaze. Moreover, the moderate terms of settlement which nearly all Irish Nationalists would have welcomed with sincerity then, as containing the germs of Freedom in its happiest efflorescence, had now become irretrievably out of date in the eyes of a young generation who had experienced little but impotence from Irish politicians and deception from British ones, in the interval. The unkindest stab of all was that, in his last stand, and in a state of health when Death was visibly overshadowing him, the Irish leader found himself deserted by the self-same men who had goaded him into forsaking the Policy of 1903, and were striving desperately now to atone for the consequences of Hibernianism by opening a fresh chapter of deceit as converts to a Dominion Home Rule declared by their old idol, Mr. Lloyd George, to be a phantom. Captain Stephen Gwynn in his book *John Redmond's last years* gives a moving picture of the final scene. So does Mr. Ronald McNeill in his *Ulster's Stand for the Union*. As the description of the official historiographers on both sides are in pretty nearly identical terms, their narratives may henceforth be accepted as settled history, and can be studied with profit side by side.

#### CAPTAIN GWYNN'S VERSION.

"I met Redmond on the night of January 14th. He had seen no one in these ten days. He told me that he was still uncertain what would happen, but asked



me to get one of the leading Co. Councillors to second his motion. Next morning I came in half an hour before the meeting to find the man I wanted. When I met him he was full of excitement and said : ' Something has gone wrong ; the men are all saying they must vote against Redmond.' Then it was evident that propaganda had been busy to some purpose.

" When Redmond came into his place I said : ' It's all right, Martin McDonagh will second your motion.' He answered with a characteristic brusqueness : ' He needn't trouble ; I am not going to move it, Devlin and the Bishops are voting against me.'

" He rose immediately the chairman was in his place. ' The amendment which I have on the paper,' he said, ' embodies the deliberate advice I give to the Convention. I consulted no one, and could not do so, being ill. It stands on record on my sole responsibility. Since entering the building I have heard that some very important Nationalist representatives are against this course — the Catholic Bishops, Mr. Devlin and others. I must face the situation, at which I am surprised, and I regret it. If I proceeded I should probably carry my point on a division, but the Nationalists would be divided. Such a division would not carry out the objects I have in view, therefore, I must avoid pressing my motion. But I leave it standing upon the paper. Others will give their advice. I feel that I can be of no further service to the Convention and will, therefore, not move.'

" There was a pause of consternation. The Chairman intervened and the debate proceeded and was carried on through the week. . . . No one can overstate the effect of this episode. Redmond's personal ascendancy in the Convention had become very great. . . . The Ulstermen had more than once expressed their view that if Home Rule were sure to mean Redmond's rule, their objection to it would be



materially lessened. Now they saw Redmond thrown over, and by a combination in which the Clerical ascendancy, so much distrusted by them, was paramount."

MR. RONALD M'NEILL'S VERSION.

"For some time Mr. Redmond had given the impression of being a tired man who had lost his wonted driving-force. He took little or no part in the lobbying and canvassing that was constantly going on behind the scenes in the Convention ; he appeared to be losing grip as a leader. But he cannot be blamed for his anxiety to come to terms with Lord Midleton ; and when he found, no doubt greatly to his surprise, that a Unionist leader was ready to abandon Unionist principle and to accept Dominion Home Rule for Ireland, subject to a single reservation on the subject of Customs, he naturally jumped at it and assumed that his followers would do the same.

"But while Mr. Redmond had been losing ground, the influence of the Catholic Bishop of Raphoe had been on the increase, and that able and astute prelate was entirely opposed to the compromise on which Mr. Redmond and Lord Midleton were agreed. On the evening of the 14th of January it came to the knowledge of Mr. Redmond that when the question came up for discussion next day, he would find Mr. Devlin, his principal lieutenant, in league with the ecclesiastics against him. . . . There was an atmosphere of suppressed excitement when the Chairman took his seat on the 15th. Mr. Redmond entered a few seconds later and took his usual place without betraying the slightest sign of disturbed equanimity. The Bishop of Raphoe strode past him, casting to left and right swift challenging glances. Mr. Devlin slipped quietly into his seat beside the leader he had



thrown over, without a word or gesture of greeting. . . . A minute or so of tense pause ensued. Then Mr. Redmond rose, and in a perfectly even voice and his usual measured diction, stated that he was aware that his proposal was repudiated by many of his usual followers, that the Bishops were against him and some leading Nationalists, including Mr. Devlin; that while he believed if he persisted he would have a majority, the result would be to split his party, a thing he wished to avoid; and that he had therefore decided not to proceed with his amendment and under these circumstances felt he could be of no further use to the Convention in the matter. For a minute or two the assembly could not grasp the full significance of what had happened. Then it broke upon them that this was the fall of a notable leader. . . . Mr. Redmond took no further part in the work of the Convention; his health was failing and the members were startled by the news of his death on the 6th of March."

John Redmond did, indeed, quit the Convention Hall never to return. He had been suffering from an inward disease against which, in any case, he could not have struggled much longer. But if ever an Irish leader died of a broken heart (as, woful to confess, is the normal penalty attached to the distinction), it may with truth be said that John Redmond died of Mr. Lloyd George's "Irish Convention," composed in the main of his own partisans, and that the tragedy is the only practical result—so far as Ireland is concerned—for which that ill-omened body will be remembered. The ghastly attempt to prolong the sittings for some weeks after his death, and to juggle with the figures of the divisions so as to represent that something like a sub-majority vote of the majority had been engineered, fell absolutely flat in a country where the Convention only escaped aversion by perishing of contempt. "Ulster" stood precisely where she did, on the rock of a Partition sanctioned by Ireland's



own "Nationalist" representatives, and these worthies, split up between those who would have clung to Mr. Redmond, and those who dismissed him to his deathbed, were united only in the destruction which overtook the entire body of 70 members of the Convention (with one solitary exception) as soon as their constituencies got the opportunity of settling accounts with them at the General Elections, Parliamentary and Local. Mr. Dillon, who had been all along the masked leader, now became the responsible leader of "The Party," but it was only to officiate as chief mourner at its funeral.

For Mr. Lloyd George the Convention was not so barren of results. "Ireland might starve but great George weighed twenty stone." Ireland was duped, and John Redmond in his grave, but Great Britain was throbbing with the sight of the United States despatching her soldiers in millions to the rescue of England. The Prime Minister had one other memorable satisfaction. On April 9th, 1918, the day on which the "Report" of the Convention was submitted to the Cabinet, and without (as he confessed) doing the unfortunate document the courtesy of reading it, he announced that his word to Ireland was to be broken again, and that Conscription was to be imposed upon Ireland in violation of his solemn promise to the contrary.



## CHAPTER XXIII

## A TRUE "NATIONAL CABINET"

THE resistance to Conscription led to the first and last occasion on which all descriptions of Nationalists—Parliamentary, Republican and Labourite—acted unitedly together. One of the bribes by which Mr. Lloyd George had secured the silence of the Hibernian Party, while "the Home Rule Government," with a sweeping "Home Rule" majority was being transformed into a Coalition dominated by Sir E. Carson, was the promise that Ireland would be exempted from Conscription. The promise was to be impudently broken now when the Hibernian Party had parted with its casting vote. By a grisly coincidence, on the day when the Report of the Irish Convention was submitted to the Cabinet, Mr. Lloyd George rose in the House of Commons to propose that the Conscription Act be extended to Ireland. His announcement wrung from me the exclamation: "That is a declaration of war against Ireland!" It also wrought the rank-and-file of the Hibernian Party into an outburst of real indignation. Mr. Lloyd George had, however, his answer that put to silence the falsetto passion of their leaders. He was ready with quotations from the late Mr. Redmond, in which he said: "Let me state what is my personal view on the question of compulsion. I am prepared to say I will stick at nothing—nothing which is necessary—in order to win this war," and from his successor, Mr. Dillon, who added: "Like Mr. Redmond I view the thing from the point of view of necessity and expediency. I would not hesitate to support Con-



scription to-morrow, if I thought it was necessary to maintain liberty, and if there was no Conscription we ran the risk of losing the war." The Prime Minister had no difficulty in satisfying the condition of "necessity" by appealing to the desperate emergency of the moment, when "with American aid we can save the war, but even with American help we cannot feel secure." After which he was able to give short shrift to the present blatant indignation of the Hibernian leaders and to the spluttering war-cries of their bemuddled followers.

The fit of hypocritical virtue which always accompanies a breach of faith with Ireland by a sanctified assurance of rewards to come was not missing on the present occasion. Conscription there must be, to be enforced within two or three weeks, but, Mr. Lloyd George sweetly warbled, it was to be washed down with a new Home Rule Bill, which he only vaguely adumbrated as one to be founded on the Majority Report of the Irish Convention; but inasmuch as he casually mentioned that he had not yet read the Majority Report at all, and as the Majority Report turned out to be a make-believe, which was impartially despised on all sides, and was, in fact, never heard of more, the perfidy of breaking the promise Ireland understood to have been plainly given, was only aggravated by the accompanying dose of British hypocrisy. It was too late, however, for the Party who had parted with their Parliamentary power to make any impression in Parliament. Their wry faces made but little impression upon the serried ranks of the Coalition. It was in Ireland, not in Westminster, Conscription had to be encountered, and not with words. It was to gird Ireland up to the terrific trial to which the Conscription Act challenged her that my own protest was principally directed:

"Whether wisely or unwisely, all parties of politicians, both English and Irish, have done their



worst to deprive my friends and myself of any effectual power of interfering in Irish affairs, but so long as I retain my seat in this House at all, I shall not shrink from the duty of making my protest, no matter how powerless it may be, against the mad and wicked crime which you are proposing to-night to perpetrate upon Ireland. For forty years now Ireland has been pleading and hungering for peace with England upon the most moderate terms. For the last eight years the representatives of the Irish people have had sovereign power of life and death over this Parliament under two successive Governments and the only fault of the Irish people was that they trusted you too much, and allowed their representatives in this House to use their tremendous powers—the greatest powers that Irishmen ever had over your Parliament—only too feebly and with only too merciful a regard for your interests. Even when this war broke out Ireland could have destroyed you. One of your own statesmen then acknowledged that Ireland was the one bright spot on your horizon. What is Ireland's reward? Now, when in your wild ignorance you have taken it into your heads that the two latest Irish elections of South Armagh and Waterford show<sup>1</sup> that the spirit of Sinn Féin is dying away, you have the country disarmed and are holding it down under Martial Law. You have your jails packed with political prisoners whom you are treating as common felons for the self-same offence of drilling a Volunteer Army, for which two of the most distinguished leaders of the Ulster Volunteers have been promoted to be Cabinet Ministers. We have witnessed to-night another exhibition of the old trick of mixing up the promise of a milk and water Home Rule Bill which you know will come to nothing with a proposal of brutal military coercion by which you ask the Irish people to shed torrents of their blood—I suppose by way of gratitude to the Prime Minister for casting to

<sup>1</sup> Five Hibernians were returned.



the winds, as he did to-night, another solemn promise to the Irish nation. . . . If you expect co-operation or gratitude all I can tell you is you will receive nothing and deserve nothing but the detestation of a people who only a few months ago were all but on their knees proffering you their friendship and their allegiance. I say all this with bitter regret, because you have compelled me to renounce those dreams of a true and permanent reconciliation between these two countries with which I can truly say my thoughts have been occupied night and day for the past fifteen years. . . . I do not want on an occasion of this kind to accentuate differences amongst Irish Nationalists. You have perhaps by this proposal to-night done something to lessen those differences and to ensure that however serious our differences have been and are, on this question of resistance to Conscription you will find all Irish Nationalists the world over who are worth their salt standing shoulder to shoulder against you. I dare say you have machine guns enough to beat down armed resistance, although you may not find it as easy a job as the Prime Minister imagines, but even if you succeed your troubles with Ireland shall be only beginning. Your own experience ought to have taught you that, in the 800 years you have spent in trying, you have never yet completely conquered Ireland and you never shall. What you will do, I am afraid, will be to drive resistance into other channels with which, with all your military power, you will never be able to deal, and you will be digging a gulf of hatred between the two countries which no living man will see bridged over again. I hate to say it in your present hour of trouble, but in my solemn belief it is the truth. By this Bill, instead of winning soldiers for your army, you are calling down upon your heads the execrations of the entire Irish race in America and Australia and Canada, as well as in every honest Irish home, if not among the five hundred thousand men



of Irish blood in your own military camps, and you are driving millions of the best men of our race to turn away their eyes from this Parliament for ever."

Never was perfidy more swiftly punished. To the demand for her best blood, coming from the Government which had just broken its word twice over, by the fraudulent Convention, and by the violation of its pledge to exempt her from Conscription, Ireland made answer that her blood would be spent rather in resisting the decree of her oppressors, and to the world's amaze, it was the all but unarmed "small nationality" that succeeded, and it was the Power counting its soldiers by millions that went down in the encounter. The happy idea of turning that resistance into a heavensent bond of National Unity occurred to the Lord Mayor of Dublin (Ald. O'Neill), who can truly be described as the only Irishman of our time, who lived through long years of civil war, and belonged to no Party, but gave noble service to them all. He summoned a Mansion House Conference at which the leaders of all sections met around the same board to organize the resistance. The Conference was so happily constituted as to deserve the description of it given by the official organ of Sinn Féin—*The Irish Bulletin*—that "it formed a National Cabinet." Its members were—For the Sinn Féin Party, Mr. De Valera and Mr. Arthur Griffith; for the Hibernian Party—Mr. Dillon and Mr. Devlin; for the All-for-Ireland Party, Mr. T. M. Healy and myself; and for the Irish Labour Party, Messrs. Johnston, O'Brien and Egan. The country was fused as it was never fused before by the common danger into a glowing National unity so complete that any order countersigned by "the National Cabinet" would have been obeyed without question by every Nationalist of the race.

Its sittings gave me my first opportunities of getting acquainted with Mr. De Valera. His transparent



sincerity, his gentleness and equability captured the hearts of us all. His gaunt frame and sad eyes deeply buried in their sockets had much of the Dantesque suggestion of "the man who had been in hell." His was that subtle blend of virility and emotion which the Americans mean when they speak of "a magnetic man." Even the obstinacy (and it was sometimes trying) with which he would defend a thesis, as though it were a point in pure mathematics, with more than the French bigotry for logic, became tolerable enough when, with a boyish smile, he would say: "You will bear with me, won't you? You know I am an old schoolmaster." On the other hand the Memphis Sphinx could not well have been more mute than was Mr. Arthur Griffith during these consultations, but his silence had something of the placid strength and assuredness of that granitic Egyptian countenance. Nobody acquainted with his abundant and excellent work as a publicist will suspect that he said nothing because he had nothing to say. So long as all went well, he was content to listen. He raised no difficulties. He gave no hint of personal preferences or fads. Throughout our sittings, Mr. Healy was considerate and conciliatory to a degree that took away the breath of Mr. Dillon himself, and he contributed to our proceedings in the form of an Address to President Wilson, a statement of Ireland's historic case which will deserve to live in our National archives as a State paper of classic value. On the day of our first meeting at the Mansion House, the Irish Bishops were meeting also at Maynooth, twelve miles away. It will always be counted among my most consolatory memories that it was my good fortune to frame for submission to the Bishops a resolution outlining the form of National Resistance to be adopted. It was Mr. De Valera who drew up the words of the Anti-Conscription Pledge which we suggested should be solemnly taken in every parish in the country on the



following Sunday. It was, indeed, a drastic one, and led to a logomachy between its author and Mr. Dillon so prolonged that I had to appeal to the Lord Mayor to force a decision, or the Bishops would have dispersed and our deputation would arrive too late. The necessity for haste was justified. When the deputation reached Maynooth, the Bishops had concluded their meeting with a resolution energetic enough as a Platonic protest against Conscription but as water unto wine compared with the specific declaration of war of which our deputation were the bearers. Fortunately their Lordships reassembled and adopted with but few changes even of words the substance of our recommendations "solemnly pledging the Nation to resist Conscription by the most effectual means at their disposal," and inaugurating the National resistance by a Mass of Intercession in every church in the island to be followed by the public administration of the Pledge. The Bishops, who have not always been so fortunate in their dealings with Irish political affairs, deserve the lasting gratitude of the nation for the fortitude (and it was greater than persons without intimate secret knowledge could estimate) with which they faced all the perils of saving their race. It was the Bishops' solemn benediction to the resistance "by the most effectual means at the disposal of the Irish people" which killed Conscription.

Next, of course, to the known determination of the youth of the country to be worthy of their lead and to resist unto blood. Even the appalling experiences of the war let loose later on by Sir Hamar Greenwood will scarcely enable posterity to realize in what a perfect ecstasy of self-sacrifice the young men were preparing to meet Conscription foot to foot. The Government on its own side seemed not less resolute. Every regiment that could be spared was hurried over to Ireland, and Field Marshal French, fresh from the horrors of the Flanders battlefields, was sent over as



Commander-in-Chief to superintend the operations which were to begin "in a week or two." Early on the morning of the day on which the Mansion House Conference was to hold its first meeting, I was awakened in my bedroom at the Shelbourne Hotel by the noise of a military band escorting Field-Marshal French on his arrival by the morning mail from England. As he stepped out of his motor-car to enter the Hotel, I heard him saluted by waiters, porters and chambermaids from almost every window of the Hotel (once the most aristocratic in the metropolis) with shouts of "Up, Easter Week!" "Up, the rebels!" The outburst so impressed the new Commander-in-Chief that he took his meals in his bedroom, and only from the hands of his orderly. The Head Waiter once entering his room was asked what did the people really mean to do about Conscription. "Well, my lord," was the quiet reply, "we are seventy men in this house. We have all made our peace with God. You may have our dead bodies, but you'll get nothing else." Another experience of mine will help better than any wealth of detail to an understanding of the spirit now enkindled. General Gage, an honest-hearted Englishman, who came over to Ireland for the first time to take command of the Conscription campaign in the South, called upon me to relate with an almost comical surprise what had befallen him the previous day while he was motoring in the neighbourhood of Mitchelstown with the High Sheriff for the County (Mr. Philip Harold Barry) who had himself publicly and with arm uplifted taken the pledge to resist Conscription. They questioned a priest whom they met riding down from the Galtee Mountains as to how feeling ran among the people. "I can't do better," was the reply of the priest, "than tell you what happened up the road there a minute ago. I met old Darby Ryan who complained that the jackdaws had been playing havoc



with his field of young corn. 'Father,' he said, 'I went for the ould gun to have a shot at the divvells, but I found I had only five cartridges left, and, Father,' he said, 'I'm going to keep them for the first five sojers that come to take away my boy.' " Such was the spirit, it must with truth be owned, which alone could have brought the Ministers of England to repent their breach of faith on Conscription, but " in a week or two " it decided them to drop a campaign which would assuredly have cost them a dozen casualties in their own ranks at the least for every conscript they could ever succeed in transporting whole to Flanders.

With the success of united action, as against Conscription, came the more and more insistent cry for an extended unity from the crowds that night and day surged around our closed doors at the Mansion House. They could guess but vaguely what was going on within, but Sinn Féin, Labour and ourselves were in an accord that was on no occasion broken. The Labour delegates (two of whom have since become conspicuous figures in the formation of an Irish Labour Party in the Dáil) were helpful in council and fearless in their preparations for resistance. One of our colleagues alone stood coldly aloof. Mr. Dillon did not like the Conference and was with reluctance drawn into it. He regarded every practical line of action suggested with suspicion and alarm. Mr. De Valera's own opinion that the young men would infinitely prefer open fight with arms in their hands to the small torments of passive resistance, he received with a long face which made it clear that the innumerable applications from the country for instructions could only be answered by the leaders of each section for themselves. His only active concern with our affairs was the determination to retain his hold on the administration of the vast funds contributed on our first appeal. He was apparently obsessed with the suspicion that they would be spent on armaments. Even were that not



so, he always held to the control of funds as the control of the sinews of war. And as neither Mr. Healy nor I were able to devote the necessary time to the business of the Financial Committee he objected with energy to any representative of the All-for-Ireland League being substituted in our place. Mr. Devlin, while more cautious, imitated the detachment of his principal, if he was, indeed, any longer his principal. Before the National Cabinet was long at work, Field Marshal French, who had by this time become Viceroy, struck a blow which was excessively unworthy of an honest soldier. On the pretence that he had discovered some new and blood-curdling "German Plot," he tore away Mr. De Valera and Mr. Griffith from our Conference table and shut them up with a hundred of their chief lieutenants without any form of trial in English prisons. The "German Plot" was obviously, as it is now universally confessed to have been, a villainous fabrication. When at our next meeting, I proposed a resolution protesting to the world against the foul blow struck at our two colleagues, with the manifest object of breaking up the Mansion House Conference, Mr. Dillon protested hotly: "That is a monstrous Sinn Féin resolution; I will have nothing to do with it. What evidence have we before us?" The "evidence," one might suppose, was rather due from the official concocters of the Plot. It was forthcoming only too promptly for them in the declaration of the retiring Lord Lieutenant, Lord Wimborne, that he had never heard of the famous "New German Plot," and flatly disbelieved the whole story. When long afterwards, Lord French was forced to disgorge his only "evidence," it turned out that "the New German Plot" was a stale rehash of certain communications with Germany prior to the Easter Week Insurrection of more than two years before.

The *coup d'état* did not break up the National



Cabinet. The places of the two abducted Sinn Féin leaders were quietly taken by two of their colleagues—Prof. Eoin MacNeill and Ald. Tom Kelly. But by this time there had occurred a new event which rendered the hopes of any larger National Unity darker and darker. A vacancy having occurred in East Cavan, Mr. Griffith had been put forward as a candidate, and Mr. Dillon started an obscure local Hibernian against him. He did something very much more discreditable ; he refused to move the writ, and, under cover of his technical power of obstructing an immediate election, flooded the county with Hibernian organizers of the old truculent type, and proposed to carry on a campaign of bitter personal abuse and violence against Sinn Féin until such time as the organizers should report it safe to issue the writ. Mr. Griffith explained what was happening in a letter written to me a few days before his deportation to England by Field-Marshal French :

*Nationality,*

6 Harcourt St., Dublin,

May 11th, 1918.

Dear Mr. O'Brien,—As you will have seen from the press Mr. Dillon has refused my offer of a referendum of the people on the election for East Cavan. At the same time he refuses to have the writ moved, but he is pouring into East Cavan all the thugs connected with his organisation. As his speech last Sunday showed, he is determined to make this a bitter election and to prolong it indefinitely.

Such a prolongation will be disastrous to the constituency from the National view-point. If the election be fought now, there will be little bitterness left behind. If it be prolonged, as Dillon seeks to prolong it, there will be feud and faction.

I am advised, as by enclosed from lawyers on our side, that two M.P.s certifying to the Speaker during



the recess the death of a fellow member can force the issue of the writ. I would be obliged, therefore, if you would yourself or by two members of your party have the writ issued in this fashion.

I trust Mrs. O'Brien is better.

Yours sincerely,

ARTHUR GRIFFITH."

We, of course, promptly exercised our power of defeating the Hibernian manœuvre to prevent an election and were in hopes that the foul play practised against Mr. Griffith by the inventors "of the New German Plot" would avert all danger of the scandal of a contested election at such a moment in Cavan. At the next meeting of the Mansion House Conference I pointed out what a mortal blow would be struck at the resistance to Conscription (as to which the Government was still anxiously calculating the chances) if a Nationalist Constituency were to reject a man who had just been gagged and deported by Dublin Castle for the very reason that he was one of the chief organizers of the resistance, and I appealed to Mr. Dillon in the most conciliatory terms at my command to do a signal service to National Unity, and one that would be remembered to the credit of his Party, by allowing Mr. Griffith to be returned unopposed. The reply was that he had come there on an invitation to discuss the Conscription issue, and that alone, and would withdraw from the Conference if any other topic was introduced. He went off to Cavan to war upon his imprisoned colleague, flushed with the results of the two most recent elections (in South Armagh, the cradle of "the Mollies" and in Waterford where Mr. Redmond's son had been returned in his place through a humane feeling more delicate than he had experienced from his own friends in his last visit to the hall of the "Irish Convention") and full of the fatuous confidence that the triumph was going to be repeated on a more grandiose scale in East Cavan.



Here are the terms in which he saw fit to speak during the electioneering campaign of his deported colleague on the Mansion House Conference :

“ The Sinn Féin party have elected to put forward as a candidate for East Cavan the most offensive and scurrilous critic of the Irish Party in their ranks. For a long period Mr. Griffith has poured forth a torrent of the most disgusting and infamous abuse and calumny on the Irish Party as a whole and upon individual members of that party and therefore it would have been impossible to pick out a candidate more calculated to add bitterness to that fight. In addition to that they have started their campaign by raising the most contentious issues that divide the Party from Sinn Féin and by pouring out a flood of misstatements and calumny upon the Party and its policy.”

The curious student of Mr. Dillon's speeches will find that this “ flood and torrent of disgusting and infamous abuse ” constitutes almost word for word his stereotyped defence to specific allegations as to his Party's public actions which he never attempted to answer by going into equally concrete particulars.

The charge of “ scurrility ” was a specially ludicrous one against Mr. Griffith who, of all the publicists of his time, was distinguished for the measure and dignity of his words. The real point of the Hibernian leader's vituperation was that Mr. Griffith had given to the public in his journal the series of secret telegrams in which the three members for Limerick were caught soliciting a Castle Office for one of their confederates by the most abject methods of the parliamentary place-beggar. Mr. Griffith had committed the still more unforgivable sin of giving publication to a highly confidential letter of Lady Aberdeen to “ Dear Mr. Brayden ” (the Editor of the *Freeman's Journal*, thirteen of whose staff had already been rewarded with handsome Government jobs) in



which the Lord Lieutenant's wife revealed a spirit of political partisanship so undisguised that its publication necessitated her husband's resignation of the Viceroyalty. Stern methods of political warfare, both of them, no doubt, but both of them referring to concerns of deep public interest, and both of them incontestably true ; and assuredly no more deserving the epithets of "scurrility," or of "torrents of the most infamous calumny," than Edmund Burke would have deserved them for his impeachment of Warren Hastings. Above all, the recklessness of such an attitude at such a moment towards a colleague locked up in an English jail on the strength of a truly "infamous calumny" which might have cost him his life !

Where he might have reaped the gratitude of a nation, the new Hibernian leader only earned a just humiliation. Mr. Griffith was elected by an overwhelming majority for East Cavan, or Conscripton would have been to a certainty pressed at any cost of bloodshed.

One last effort was made to bend Mr. Dillon. The yearning cry still came from the country : "Why dissolve a National Cabinet, which has begun so well, and whose united lead every parish in the island will follow ? Why should not the Mansion House Conference confront English Ministers with a combination of the young men and the old, of the new weapons and the old, in a movement in which all honest men of the race could gladly venture their fortunes and their lives ?" It had become an accepted electioneering cry on both sides that there could be only two alternative policies for the country to choose between : what was called "the Constitutional movement" and what was called "the unconstitutional movement." Nothing could be more untrue to the realities of the case. All that had been won for Ireland in our time was won neither by constitutional means nor by unconstitutional means, pure and simple, but by a



judicious combination of the two, according to the country's changing circumstances. That, indeed, had been the history of Irish patriotism for ages. The writer laid before the Mansion House Conference a detailed proposal to take advantage of their unexampled opportunity at that moment to find some wider basis of agreement on which all Parties might co-operate in their several ways. "If our Sinn Féin colleagues," it was urged, "can only see their way to even an experimental toleration of true Dominion Independence (which differs little except in name from Sovereign Independence) no substantial divergence would remain between Nationalists of any school, and it could be affirmed, not altogether without knowledge, that, in England's present critical situation, Dominion Independence would become practical politics. Should, however, Dominion Independence by agreement be found impossible during the war, all Nationalists would in that event be in agreement to press for the only remaining alternative—viz., representation for Ireland at the Peace Congress—and would, I take it, be agreed also in breaking off all connection with the Westminster Parliament in the meantime."

Was it still practicable to weld "constitutionalists" and "unconstitutionalists" together in a movement as circumspect as Parnell's and as daring as Easter Week? It was not possible to answer dogmatically in the affirmative. But the omens were almost all auspicious. The representatives of Sinn Féin, although cordially sympathetic, had no authority to bind their body without anxious and complicated consultations. But there were as yet none of the obstacles that proved afterwards all but insurmountable. There were no commitments to an Irish Republic, beyond Mr. De Valera's speeches in Clare; there was no oath to trouble the consciences of the young men. Most of the Sinn Féin leaders



were in prison and their newspapers suppressed, and those who remained were face to face with the ruthless military repression just announced by Lord French. Even in the electoral sense, Sinn Féin still only counted as 5 in a Nationalist representation of 81. The representatives of Labour would assuredly have closed with the proposition. The Bishops, fresh from the triumph of their perilous stand against Conscription, were not likely to miss the opportunity of doing another magnificent service to the nation. Mr. Devlin, though he hesitated to separate himself from Mr. Dillon so soon after he had separated himself from Mr. Redmond, was evincing unmistakeable signs of tractability. Only one voice was raised to forbid even a discussion of the project. Mr. Dillon could not find it in the bond. He once more protested that he was brought there on the invitation of the Lord Mayor to discuss one solitary issue—Conscription—and would not stand the introduction of any other proposition; and as it had been the somewhat improvident rule of the Conference to press no decision that was not to be an unanimous one, there was an end.

An end, also, of the last hope of rehabilitating any “constitutional” movement capable of purification or of purchasing Ireland’s freedom otherwise than by the shedding of streams of Ireland’s best blood. The “National Cabinet,” like so many other projects of high promise for the nation, fell to pieces at the touch of one unlucky hand.



## CHAPTER XXIV

WAS IT STILL POSSIBLE TO RECONSTRUCT THE  
PARLIAMENTARY MOVEMENT ?

FOR six months before the Convention came into being, the question whether the Parliamentary Movement could be preserved or was worth preserving had been agitating the minds of my colleagues and myself.

When the constancy of Cork—unique, so far as I know, in the electoral history of any country—compelled me to return to public life, against all my natural cravings to be once for all free from those little villainies of politics which no party and no country can hope altogether to shake off, I pledged myself not to withdraw again so long as Cork might want me. Events now succeeded each other which might well seem to absolve me from the pledge, and to show that the suppression of free speech by physical violence and in the newspapers which had drowned my voice in the rest of the country was beginning to invade the free field still left to me within the broad boundaries of the county and city of Cork. The City Municipal elections, the Co. Council elections, even the Parliamentary elections were beginning to go against the All-for-Ireland League. These petty choppings and changings never disturbed in its depths the almost mystic bond between the masses of the people and myself, which indeed survives all permutations and revolutions to this hour, if a thousand tender indications are not deceptive. An unpopularity which had to be laboriously organized and subsidised to make the slightest show and which in all these years



did not succeed in seducing half a dozen renagadoes from our ranks whose names are worth recalling from oblivion was, for those who knew, a matter of infinitely small concern in itself. It, however, achieved two or three local successes sufficiently boisterous to enable malice, with some show of reason, to persuade the opportunists of Britain that the halt-a-million of *pur sang* Nationalists of the South who had hitherto stood fast by the policy of "Conference, Conciliation and Consent" against a world of discouragements, were at long last deserting their standard.

How lying was the pretence, I took the first opportunity of putting to the test. Owing to intricacies of corrupt ward politics too scurvy for explanation here, the All-for-Ireland majority of the Corporation of Cork was displaced at the Municipal Elections in the beginning of 1914 and the victors in their intoxication boasted that Cork had gone over to the Hibernians and challenged me, in language of incredible scurrility to resign my seat and test at the polls whether the confidence of the people of Cork in me was not gone for ever. Under ordinary conditions, of course, the challenge would be dismissed with a smile. So effectual, however, had become for years the obstruction of the ordinary channels of public opinion that no means short of the figures at a contested election, or the verdict of a jury in an action for libel, were open to me to establish, in the eyes of the country at large, the falsehood of any specific accusation amongst the imputations and insinuations daily showered upon my head. My readiness to avail myself of the most Democratic of all tests—that of an appeal to my constituents, since no other was left to me—actually came to be imputed as the most heinous item in my table of sins. This time, however, their tipsy insolence betrayed my adversaries into being themselves the challengers, and there was but one answer. I resigned my seat and presented myself



for re-election on a programme expressly reiterating in every particular our proposals for the appeasement of Ulster. The vaunting challengers of a week before crept abjectly back into their burrows, and the great constituency of Cork—the largest and (perhaps not on that account alone) the most coveted in the country—re-elected me without an opposing voice.

In the summer of the same year followed the elections for the Co. Councils and the District Councils—that is to say a few weeks after the representatives of Ireland had by their votes accepted the Amending Bill for the separation of the Six Counties and the All-for-Ireland group had made the one solitary protest that was heard from Ireland. Any one acquainted with all that the Irish people now know might suppose that it would be those who had just finally voted for Partition who would appear before their countrymen in sackcloth and ashes, and those whose protest had at least saved for the future Ireland's honour as a nation who would be greeted with the nation's gratitude. In the country's dire ignorance of what happened, it was the other way about. It was "The Party" redhanded from the crime of Partition who were acclaimed as the saviours of the country; it was on the strength of the diabolical lie that we had "voted against Home Rule" that some six hundred of our friends in the Co. Councils and District Councils of the South were arraigned as "factionists" and "traitors"; and to the shame of Irish gullibility it was this outrageous electoral fraud that carried the day. The cry was only raised at the last moment when it was too late to make the bewildered electors aware of the truth, and by a verdict which the universal Irish race would now remorsefully recant, it was the mutilators of Ireland who were held justified, and it was the candidates of the group who alone had lifted a voice against the infamy who were borne down as traitors. The success of the Hibernians was of the



narrowest, and could not have been achieved at all without the countenance of some half-a-dozen powerful Catholic dignitaries who must have been sufficiently punished if they discovered the practices of the corrupt secret tyranny of which they made themselves the unconscious ministers.<sup>1</sup> But the mischief was done of persuading the rest of Ireland and the watchful politicians at Westminster that the last fortresses, hitherto immune from the power of the Board of Erin, had fallen. By no matter how narrow a majority, the local government of vast regions of the South was placed for the next seven years at the mercy of men who refused the smallest honour or office which their votes could deny to their brother Nationalists and more mischievously still, deprived the 30,000 Protestants of Cork of their solitary representative on the Co. Council—an All-for-Irelander of much local usefulness—who was ejected to the cry of “Cromwellian Spawn!” and “Orange Dog!” The saddest thought of all was that results like this were a wicked libel upon the mass of the Southern Catholics who were, and are, kindness and religious tolerance incarnate.

Our Parliamentary strongholds remained impregnable, but were not to remain so long. Our band at Westminster, thin as were its ranks, had all the advantages that compactness, mutual loyalty, and self abnegation could give it. Ours was a blithe and dauntless company whose beadroll it will always be a comfort to tell—the two Healys, Tim and Maurice, Parliament men of the first rank, who need play second

<sup>1</sup> One of our foremost candidates was tempted—in vain—by the offer of a Resident Magistracy. Another, who was rewarded with a Coronership, made this jaunty excuse for turning his coat: “Of course, O’Brien is right, but he has no jobs to give.” A third—a prosperous merchant, and one of the most upright of men—was sought to be intimidated by the awful threat (none the less shocking that it proved a *telum imbellis sine ictu*) that “the grass would be made to grow opposite the door of his shop.”



to no living men, Irish or English, on the benches of the House of Commons—the one for brilliancy and the other for solidity ; Captain D. D. Sheehan, one who had turned more farmers into proprietors than the whole Hibernian Party put together, and had been one of the prime movers in the settlement of 50,000 labourers in cosy cottages and allotments ; James Gilhooly, of Bantry, who represented the finest traditions of the old Fenian days, and had a place in the hearts of his constituents from which it used to be truly said, all the united power of Parnell and his captains could not dislodge him, had they ever chosen to try ; Eugene Crean, in whom the bitterest of our adversaries was ready to recognise “ the heart’s blood of an honest man,” one with the tenderheartedness of a child and the fearlessness of a Nemean lion ; John Walsh, a merchant of eminence, with an unsurpassable knowledge of the people and of their affairs ; and “ Paddy ” Guiney, who brought into the movement the rough-rider breeziness and “ pep ” of American Democracy. Among the non-parliamentarians as well we were able to count upon towers of strength—Father Richard Barrett, the foremost of our clerical friends in mind and heart, who was untimely stricken with blindness, but to the day of his death remained for us a sort of sanctuary lamp whose internal light was one not to be extinguished ; Alderman J. C. Forde, who for twenty years had been the mainstay of Nationality in Cork in its successive phases—in arms or in the broadest spirit of Conciliation—and in all its phases was the organizer of victory, who never advertised, and the unshakeable friend, who was as constant when the heavens frowned as when the sun was at its meridian ; Jerry Howard and William McDonald, in turn chairmen of County Council, who were the real rulers of a province and were governing its affairs with a wisdom and geniality full of joyous promise for the new race of native owners



who were beginning to be the possessors of the land ; Mr. Joseph Hosford, the typical Protestant All-for-Irelander, whose steadfastness justified my warmest faith in our Protestant countrymen, had they only imitated his outspokenness in the acceptable time ; Mr. Laurence Casey, the founder of the National Insurance Association in Dublin, reliable as his ancestral " Boys of Wexford," who made the name of 'Ninety-Eight immortal and straight as the pike-staffs twelve feet long with which they drove home their thrusts ; Mr. Dan O'Donovan of Limerick, afterwards barbarously murdered by the Black-and-Tans—where am I to stop in a gazette that can only contain one out of as many thousands of devoted friends, the bare echo of whose names makes my pulses still tingle ?

So long as, with such auxiliaries as these, our title to speak for the fairest region of Nationalist Ireland—that which had been the focus of all previous struggles and was to be again the focus of the struggle that followed—could not be disputed, it was a duty to labour on against all odds until the remainder of the country could have an opportunity of understanding. In the midst of our own camp that title was now to be seriously compromised. The deaths of two of our members created vacancies during the critical months that followed our reverses at the County and District elections. In the first of these constituencies, none but an All-for-Irelander had any prospect of being elected ; but the evil Hibernian habit of regarding seats in Parliament as hereditary possessions had so far eaten its way into our own ranks, that the candidate returned, although an All-for-Irelander like his deceased brother, represented not so much a principle as the predominance of " a long-tailed family." A more calamitous breach was to follow before many months, and—a wayward fate would have it—as the result of the death of the member for West Cork,



James Gilhooly, who was a friend as true as ever poet, sang of, and, like the old Fenian hero that he was, would have given his blood drop by drop rather than that the scramble for his seat should add to our thickening troubles. The absurd thing was that the chief disturber was a medical student from a Mental Hospital in Birmingham, who was an All-for-Irelander more orthodox than myself, and in that infallible faith proceeded to split the All-for-Ireland vote by standing *motu proprio* as a candidate himself. This, as the son of a doctor of much popularity in one of our most solid voting places (Schull), he was unfortunately in a position to do.

The candidature of the crank from the Birmingham Mental Hospital was only one of the multiple signs of the demoralization and decomposition of the Parliamentary movement which the West Cork election was to exhibit. To the crazy rival candidate from Birmingham, more Catholic than the Pope—more All-for-Irelander than the All-for-Ireland League—was added a local Hibernian solicitor, who in defiance of Mr. Redmond's expressed public orders, persisted in profiting by the Split for parochial purposes of his own; an Orange Sinn Féiner from Belfast, without any authority from Sinn Féin, who a couple of months afterwards reverted to the bitterest Orangeism; and, to complete the incredible catalogue, a Bishop, more Redmondite than Mr. Redmond, who issued a manifesto insisting that Mr. Redmond had not yet received a sufficiently blind trust from the country, but shortly after the election turned a violent Sinn Féiner himself, and from a violent Sinn Féiner reacted to denounce Sinn Féin more violently still and within the next few years was destined to undergo half a dozen new transmigrations—"everything by turns and nothing long"—from Sinn Féin to Anti-Sinn-Féin and back again in an equally nonsensical manner. To his Lordship belongs the triste glory of striking the last blow at the existence of the Parliamentary movement.



It was Bishop Coholan's ill-advised intervention on the eve of the polling that turned a scale already heavily weighted enough against us. His electioneering harangue was all the more indefensible that it was delivered on the peculiarly solemn day of his Consecration, and on the occasion of a purely religious presentation to him, by a deputation more than half of whom—had he, an eminent Maynooth scholiarch, unversed in the ways of the world or of politics, only known it—were enthusiastic All-for-Irelanders as well as fervid Catholics. How distressing the episode was may be judged from the fact that the Bishop's own elder brother—a Canon of the Diocese and Parish Priest of Bantry—who had been and remained one of the foremost friends of the All-for-Ireland League in West Cork, felt it his duty to quit the assembly while the glorification of an utterly discredited Hibernianism was in progress. The pronouncement of the new Bishop, however, had its effect upon a number of the younger priests who were making up their minds to forsake the falling fortunes of Hibernianism.

Our candidate was Mr. Frank Healy, a barrister still interned in England, who was chosen because he seemed to combine the conciliatory spirit of an All-for-Irelander with something of the romantic charm of Sinn Féin. He had been snapped up in the wild orgy of Martial Law that followed the Rising of Easter Week, although everybody except the Court-martial knew that with that enterprise he had no relations, overt or secret. He was still under the restrictions of a conditional internment in Bournemouth, and his attempt to obtain leave to visit the constituency before the election gave rise to a stroke of governmental foul-play, which was the crowning disgrace of the foul practices from all sides of which we were the victims. That crafty financier, Mr. Herbert Samuel, who had fobbed off the fearful and



wonderful finances of the Home Rule Bill on the Hibernian Party, was guilty of a piece of execrably bad taste in an endeavour to compensate them. In collusion with a questioner from the Hibernian benches, he insinuated that, in his application to him, as Home Secretary, for permission to visit West Cork for the election campaign, Mr. Frank Healy had really been putting in an abject petition for mercy, and the calumny was emphasized in scare headings in the Board of Erin Press and placarded at every cross-roads in the constituency. Finally, in this most topsy-turvy of contests, it fell out that the Protestant farmers and their clergymen, who formed a considerable element of the constituency, voted against Mr. Frank Healy because he was a Sinn Féiner and the Sinn Féin priests because he was not.

“For a’ that, an’ a’ that”—the Bishop’s unseemly intervention, an’ a’ that—the votes actually cast for All-for-Ireland were 2,120 as against 1,868 for the candidate of the Board of Erin, being an All-for-Ireland majority of 252. But 370 of the All-for-Ireland votes having been thrown away upon the candidate of the Birmingham Mental Hospital, the Hibernian was enabled to succeed, as a minority member, by a majority of 118. Mr. Redmond (who had deprecated the contest in West Cork) was so transported by this sorry triumph as to brag in England that “there was no longer any alternative policy before the country, nor even an alternative leader”; Mr. Dillon, with the perspicacity that never failed him, saw in the return of the minority member the first flush of a second spring of popularity for “The Party.” My own reading of the event, in my remarks at the declaration of the poll in Bantry, if less poetic, was to be more tragically justified:

“They (All-for-Irelanders) had done their part by Ireland so long as even the stump of a sword was left in their hands against a combination of influences



from the Extreme Right to the Extreme Left such as might well have discouraged the stoutest hearts. . . . It would be idle to minimise the gravity of the decision of yesterday, although, as the figures proved it was only come to by a minority of the electors who voted, and although it was due to influences which they all understood in Ireland but which would be fatally misunderstood in England. All he could hope was that the result would not mark the end of any honest constitutional movement for our time, and that those electors of West Cork who had done the mischief would not have reason to lament their work for many a bitter year to come."

The West Cork election turned out to be, truly, the death-blow of the Parliamentary movement. It was the last time the chaste war-cry of the Hibernians: "Up, the Mollies!" was ever heard in triumph in the South. A week or two afterwards, Mr. Asquith after long fumbling threw down the reins of power. That extraordinary *ménage à trois*—Mr. Lloyd George, Mr. Bonar Law and Sir E. Carson—were installed in his room without a protesting voice from the Hibernian benches. The Home Rule of the Gladstone tradition was at an end for ever. It will always be open to debate, whether, had the result in West Cork gone the other way, it might not have been still possible to regenerate what was loosely called "the constitutional movement" by a combination of the principles of Conciliation as between creeds and classes, which was before long to carry all before it in the minds of all enlightened Irishmen, with the young energy and purity of purpose represented by Sinn Féin. The Irish Republic was still unheard of, save for its meteor flight in Easter Week. While the Sinn Féin internees in the English prisons sternly resented any aid from the Parliamentarians whose leader had "expressed his horror and detestation" of the rebels awaiting their doom at the hands of Sir



John Maxwell's Courts-martial, I received, while the West Cork campaign was still in progress, two letters signed by the leaders of the 600 internees at Frongoch (among the signatories being those of Mr. Richard J. Mulcahy, the subsequent Minister of Defence in the Republican Cabinet and of the "Head Campleader," Mr. Michael Staines, afterwards one of the members for Dublin in *Dáil Éireann*) invoking my aid in the exposure of their prison treatment. When one or two Republican madcaps in Cork secretly confederated with the Hibernians in wrecking the candidature of their brother-internee, Mr. Frank Healy, one of the earliest pioneers of Sinn Féin, I received a message from Mr. Arthur Griffith, the future President of the Irish Provisional Government, dated from Reading Jail, where a large body of Sinn Féin prisoners were detained, expressing on behalf of all his brother-prisoners, with one exception, their reprobation of these unholy intrigues.

"Re our friend Frank Healy," Mr. Griffith said, "I think the whole business has been hideously mismanaged by our friends Pim,<sup>1</sup> Tom Curtin and others. Tom Curtin's pronouncement was an entirely unauthorised statement and has caused considerable annoyance among us. I think Sinn Féin should have remained absolutely aloof and I fear that not doing so will be the cause of lamentable confusion and mischief. What I have said concerning Tom Curtin's pronouncement you may convey to all whom it may concern."

Even the hotheads who were ready for any combination against Parliamentaryism were so far from being animated by any personal hostility to myself, that they defended their wrecking morals upon the queer ground that I was the only man of the old school sufficiently respected to give Parliamentaryism an-

<sup>1</sup> The Orange Sinn Féiner who was in a few weeks to relapse into the faith of an Orange Anti-Sinn Féiner, more virulent than ever.



other chance with honest Irishmen. As a matter of fact, the young men of the West Cork Division paid no heed to their whispers and remained pathetically true to our beaten side. But looking back more coolly now upon the chaos and distraction of the public mind against which we were contending, one is forced to recognize that the canker had eaten too deeply into Irish public life to be cured except by some sharper surgery than it was any longer in our power to apply. Everywhere the most level-headed of the old believers in Conciliation began to report to us that nothing could prevent their sons from becoming Sinn Féiners, adding as often as not: "And, to tell you the truth, we are becoming a sort of Sinn Féiners ourselves." And so it was everywhere. The youth of the country felt the sap of a glorious springtime fermenting within them. West Cork, which even at that late date would have stood fast by a policy of peaceful conciliation, had not the appointed ministers of peace aimed the last blow at it, gave up the hope to dream of the Republic, even if it had to be sought by meeting England in battle array. The fact tells its own tale that, in the desperate insurrectionary years that were to follow, West Cork was the headquarters of a resistance to the Black-and-Tans and all their bloody aiders and abettors, perhaps more widespread and more unconquerable than in any other district in the country. Mr. Herbert Samuel and his wise brother Ministers crushed the All-for-Ireland League only to be obliged to sue for peace to Michael Collins—himself a West Corkman and a West Cork Deputy—and make him Prime Minister of the country they set out to whip into subjection.



## CHAPTER XXV

THE GENERAL ELECTION AND THE GENERAL JUDGMENT.  
(1918)

THE General Election which the war had enabled the Hibernian Party to evade for three years beyond the normal term smote them at last in November, 1918. The determination of my colleagues and myself had been formed as the result of the West Cork election of two years before, and only awaited the approaching Dissolution to be put into execution. Our conclusion was not to allow ourselves to be nominated for re-election to the English Parliament. In the words of my own address to my constituents: "The Irish people in general, in tragic ignorance of what they were being led to do, remained silent while I was being deprived of all power of interfering with effect in Irish affairs. . . . So far as the platform and the newspaper press were concerned, my position has long been that of a man buried alive and striving in vain to make his voice reach the ears of his countrymen." In these circumstances, there was nothing for it but frankly to recognize "that our efforts to reform the Parliamentary movement upon an honest basis must—under present conditions, at all events—be abandoned, and that those who have saved (and who alone could have saved) the country from Partition, from Conscription and from political corruption ought now to have a full and sympathetic trial for their own plans for enforcing the Irish nation's right of Self-determination." Mr. T. M. Healy in endorsing this conclusion, quoted: "two sentences in your exposure of the debauchment of the Parliamentary movement which strike me



as setting a datum line by which the general body of Nationalists may guide their course. You say : ' We cannot subscribe to a programme of armed resistance in the field, or even of permanent withdrawal from Westminster, but to the spirit of Sinn Féin, as distinct from its abstract programme, the great mass of independent and single-minded Irishmen have been won over.' Of the 'ruined politicians' still clinging to power, and their policies, you foretell that 'their successors cannot by any conceivable possibility do worse.' "

That was why we could not conscientiously throw ourselves into the Sinn Féin ranks. It was not Parliamentary methods, but rotten Parliamentary methods, that had broken down. That was also why we conceived it a duty to remove all obstacle on our part to the mandate of the country, as between the disgraced Hibernians and the only force in the country capable of coping with them, being as decisive as that which in 1884 empowered Parnell to overthrow a Parliamentary majority less baleful. Before the World-War, the rawest schoolboy would have laughed at the suggestion of an armed struggle with the might of England. The Sinn Féin movement, so long as it was directed by Mr. Arthur Griffith, never contemplated a rising in arms. Even its own programme of a pacific withdrawal from Westminster failed to command on its merits the approval of a single constituency. It was Sir E. Carson's example in drilling and arming with impunity a vast Ulster army to resist the law of Parliament which first inspired the young men of the South with the emulation to go and do likewise. But it was President Wilson's promulgation of the doctrine of the sovereign right of the small nationalities to shape their own future on the principle of Self-determination—above all, it was the necessity imposed upon Mr. Lloyd George to welcome that principle with seeming enthusiasm in order to ensure



the entrance of the United States into the war—which once for all fixed in the mind of the youth of Ireland the feasibility as well as the dignity of a demand for liberty arms in hand, in contrast with Parliamentary methods which had become a byword for failure and degradation.

It must be owned that none of us measured truly the growth of the new spirit until the Rising of Easter Week revealed as in a lightning flash how dauntless it was, and how deeply it had entered into possession of the nation's soul. The original literature of Sinn Féin was contributed by half a dozen poets and journalists who readily accepted the description of "intellectuals" accorded to them by admiring English prints. They were not content with contemning the poor work-a-day politicians who transferred the land to the people and three times over forced their way to the very last rampart between Ireland and Home Rule. They went to the ludicrous length of despising because it was "intelligible" the poetry of Thomas Davis, which was so grossly "intelligible" that it has roused the hearts of two generations of Irishmen like a burst of trumpets. They actually proposed the De—Davisisation of Ireland (the phrase is that of the intellectuals) as an adventure of the highest literary distinction. The insincerity of these *précieux* and consequently their futility may be illustrated by a story of perhaps the most distinguished of their number, the ill-fated poet Synge, as related by another and more delicate dreamer, Mr. W. B. Yeats: "I once asked him: 'Do you write from hatred of Ireland or for love of her?' and he answered: 'That is just what I often ask myself.'"

With the single exception of Mr. Griffith, always a man of sound sense as well as high purpose, the intellectuals were *frondeurs* who found a superior virtue in disclaiming any part in the hard battles which had restored the ownership of the soil to the people



and given them the command of the whole machinery of local government, and which threw open the road to every victory that has followed since.<sup>1</sup> They only succeeded in limiting an influence which might have been widespread to their own small circle in Dublin. They had discredited Sinn Féin in the eyes of common men with such fatal effect that the movement had all but ceased to exist when by a bizarre blunder of English pressmen, it found its name of Sinn Féin transferred to the wholly different armed organization which had its baptism of fire in Easter Week. These distressingly ineffectual writings were not of a kind to dispel the discouraging conviction which was creeping over my once sanguine self that, in the rank demoralization in which the placeman and the place beggar thrived apace, there was no longer to be found a body of Irishmen who really thought Ireland worth dying for. To the amaze of the older generation, it turned out that such men were to be counted by the thousand, and of the very flower of the race—men for whom patriotism was a holy religion—who were as eager for death for the “Little Black Rose” in the firing line or on the gallows as were the Christian Martyrs for the embrace of the beasts in the Colosseum. We had not kept pace with the newer school of the Pearses and the O’Rahillys and MacDonaghs who had replaced the dilettanti, and who in half a dozen obscure sheets were inditing a new testament of which self-immolation for Ireland was the chief of the beatitudes, and in the very wilderness where all noble purpose seemed to have perished were raising up a generation whose disinterestedness, whose sobriety of character, whose almost incredible gift for combining action with

<sup>1</sup>“The task of William O’Brien’s generation was well and bravely done. Had it not been so the work men are carrying out in this generation would have been impossible. In that great work none of Parnell’s lieutenants did so much as Mr. William O’Brien.”—Arthur Griffith in *Young Ireland*, June, 1920.



idealism were to sweeten the air with the efflorescence of a divine springtime of the Gael. Not alone had the coal of fire of the prophet touched their tongues; in the administrative work of the country which, in spite of the brutalities of Martial Law was steadily falling into their hands, they were developing a capacity and an impartiality of outlook which put their elderly critics of the old order to shame.

Aimlessly to stand in the way of such a reformation would have been to dash the country's last hope. Nobody doubted that, had it come to a series of triangular battles, we should have in more than one instance outpaced both the Sinn Féin candidate and the Hibernian, or, indeed, induced the Sinn Féiners to desist from opposition to our re-election; but vainglory apart the only result would have been to confuse the public mind and probably enable the Hibernians to return in numbers that would have paralysed the power of reform for the term of another Parliament. It is not perhaps excessive to claim that it was in a large degree the self-effacement of the All-for-Irelanders which put it in the power of the country, upon the straightest of issues, to return a verdict which was an unmistakeable and an overpowering one. The unopposed return on the first day for nomination of Sinn Féiners for each of the seven Divisions of the vast county of Cork, followed by the defeat, by a majority of more than 13,000, of the Hibernian candidates who were rash enough to await the polling in the City, let loose an avalanche underneath which the whole fabric of the Board of Erin tyranny lay buried when the elections were over. The Party which went to the country 73 strong came back 7, which, by an ironical coincidence, happened to be one less than the number of the All-for-Ireland group they had so often rallied on its littleness. The measure of their defeat did not stop there. Only two of the seven survivors were elected by the free votes of Irish



constituencies : Captain Redmond, who was re-elected in Waterford as a tribute of respect for his father's memory and Mr. Devlin, whose power in the Hibernian district of West Belfast was still considerable. Of the remaining five, one (Mr. T. P. O'Connor) was elected for an English constituency, and the four others only succeeded in virtue of a compromise insisted upon by the Ulster Bishops by which, in certain doubtful constituencies, there was an exchange of seats between Sinn Féiners and Hibernians in order to avoid the success of the Orangemen in triangular contests.

The completeness of the overthrow was variously accounted for. The Hibernian theory that it was the shooting of twenty of the rebel leaders by Sir John Maxwell that turned over a whole people from fanatical allegiance to the Board of Erin before the Rebellion to fanatical allegiance to Sinn Féin after its defeat was of a piece with the rest of the foolish miscalculations of the doomed Party. The claim of Sinn Féin that the General Election meant a conscious and deliberate establishment of the Irish Republic by the main body of the voters was, I think, a greatly exaggerated one, also. The Sinn Féin candidates put forward no rigid Republican programme—in fact, put forward no programme at all. I can answer for the half-a-million All-for-Irelanders, who turned the scale in the South that the issue for or against a Republic did not even cross their minds as a supreme decision binding them for the future. For the overwhelming mass of Irish opinion it was a choice between a Party corrupted, demoralized and effete, who had misused in the interest of an English Party the most irresistible power ever held by Irish hands—who, for the sake of establishing for themselves a boundless monopoly of patronage in Dublin, had conspired to separate nearly a fourth of the country into an Orange Free State—between a Party who to the cries of “Trust Asquith !” “Trust



Redmond ! ” and “ Up, the Mollies ! ” had for years led the most ignorant and credulous of the masses shamefully astray, and had held the most enlightened part of public opinion powerless to express itself by an unheard of tyranny of violence, bribery and Press manipulation—and on the other hand a band of enthusiasts, young, gallant and clean of heart, of whom all they knew was that whatever mistakes they might make would be those of a too passionate love of Ireland, and who would at the least clear the road of the future by disencumbering it of a Parliamentary imposture which was ending in putrefaction. The country did not opt for any particular form of government, but did unquestionably transfer its confidence to the new men who were to frame it.

“ The Party ” was as dead as Julius Cæsar, but even in their ashes lived their wonted incapacity to understand wholesome Irish feeling. Captain Redmond, intoxicated by his family success in Waterford, blithely undertook from the hustings that he and Mr. Devlin were about to proceed on a pilgrimage from constituency to constituency throughout the island to reclaim the erring ones from their heresy, but no more was heard of the crusade of the twin Peters the Hermits. A defeated candidate in Roscommon—one Mr. Hayden—founded a brand new Home Rule Association of his own with thrilling proclamations through the *Freeman* that it was about to sweep the country ; but after three meetings the Association and the speeches in the *Freeman* expired. Mr. Dillon had no sooner pulled himself together after his monumental overthrow in East Mayo than the ex-M.P. addressed an encyclical to some ghostly Branch raised from the dead for the occasion predicting that “ before six months ” the country would have returned to its allegiance to “ The Party ” and the rightful King would have come by his own again. He ought not indeed to have needed the reminder how sadly his prophetic stock had fallen on the National



discount market for he must have received thousands of such reminders from the unpurchased tenants and the beggared shareholders of the *Freeman* who were beginning to haunt his doorstep. He had foretold that the Purchase Act of 1903 would land the country in bankruptcy and lo ! the *Freeman* office was the only conspicuous venue the bankruptcy messenger had visited, while the tenants he had forbidden to purchase were now putting forth sighs from broken hearts for the opportunity of purchasing which was no longer available.<sup>1</sup> He had predicted that if the Act of 1903 were permitted to work there would be an end of the National movement in six months and behold ! among the heroes of the rebellion thirteen years afterwards the sons of the new occupying owners were among the foremost. He now added a new prophecy with the advantage that it was one calculated to fulfil itself. It was that Sinn Féin had destroyed for ever the sympathy of America with Ireland and the shaft was barbed by reference to an incident much paraded in the anti-Irish press, in the course of which some children in a western village wishing to tear down a British flag carried by the children of local British recruits by accident tore down also a Stars and Stripes, whose folds were mingled with those of the Union Jack. The unworthy appeal to American prejudice was so little heeded that American funds poured into the Sinn Féin exchequer in greater volume than had been subscribed in all the years since the Land League put together.

If there was anything wanting to complete the contempt for Parliamentary methods, it was the insignificance of the surviving Seven in the succeeding Parliament, when the Coalition passed Mr. Lloyd George's Partition Act of 1920 formally establishing the two rival Parliaments of "Northern Ireland"

<sup>1</sup> As this book goes to Press the Free State Ministry have summoned a new Land Conference of landlords and tenants to try to resuscitate Land Purchase, destroyed by the Hibernian Act of 1909.



and "Southern Ireland." With the whole force of the Labour Party and the remnant of the "Wee Free" Liberal Party saved from the shipwreck at their backs, they might have offered an all but irresistible opposition to that infamous measure, forced upon Ireland without the sanction of a single Irish vote, Northern or Southern. The trouble was that Mr. Devlin denouncing Partition was in the position of Arius denouncing Arianism. If he now affected to hold out for "an undivided Ireland" he was met with the retort that the Partition Act was only the formal enactment of the "Headings of Agreement" he and his late Party and his late Liberal Prime Minister had collectively bargained for; if he protested (as he now plaintively did) his conversion to the doctrine of an Irish settlement by the commingling of Irishmen of all racial and religious origins, he laid himself open to the taunts of the tardiness of his conversion since the days when shouts of "our hereditary enemies!" and "Black-blooded Cromwellians!" were hurled at every Irish Protestant Unionist who extended a fraternal hand, and of his own special recipe of "ordering the police and military to stand aside and make a ring," while he was disposing of the Ulster difficulty in the streets of Belfast. Accordingly he and his Liberal friends could think of nothing better than majestically to withdraw altogether from the Committee stage of the Partition Bill and by that stroke of genius left Sir E. Carson free to gerrymander at his sweet will Mr. Devlin's own constituency of West Belfast, in such a manner that the Nationalist Division of the Falls Road was swamped by the addition of two undiluted Orange Divisions. When he and his brother withdrawers came back to register a last impassioned demand for "an Undivided Ireland" on the Third Reading, it was to find that he had been effectually gerrymandered out of the Imperial Parliament for life, and the last nail driven in the coffin of the Board of Erin Ascendancy.



## CHAPTER XXVI

## PEACEFUL SELF-DETERMINATION

APOLOGISTS for the infamies perpetrated by "the Black and Tans," under the instructions of British Ministers, have striven hard to represent these as "reprisals" for provocations more infamous still. The men they warred upon were a "murder gang" who began by the wholesale assassination of defenceless police men and soldiers, and the amiable guardians of the peace whom Sir Hamar Greenwood picked out from the offscourings of a demobilised army only came to the rescue of society by "taking the assassins by the throat." It would not be easy for impudence to invent a grosser reversal of the true sequence of events. "The murder gang" was a nation engaged in putting bloodlessly in practice the right of "self-determination for the small nations," by the promulgation of which England had won the war, and it was the British statesmen who had just rewarded with their liberty the revolted subjects of Austria for throwing off their allegiance, who started a war of brute force against their Irish subjects for following the example.

There were two distinct phases in the warfare which ended in the surrender of Mr. Lloyd George and Sir Hamar Greenwood; and in both it was England which was the aggressor. In the first phase (1917-'18) they were dealing with a nation peacefully exercising the right of self-determination; in the second (1918-'21) with an Irish Republican Army whom they had deliberately goaded and forced into action. From the time when the General Election had invested Sinn Féin with unchallenged authority as the spokesmen of their nation, they proceeded, as



was their indisputable right under the new law of nations, to supersede English rule by inducing the local governing bodies to renounce any connection with Dublin Castle and by organizing a volunteer police force and Arbitration Courts to enforce a law and order and a system of public justice of their own, leaving the garrisons and Royal Irish Constabulary of England in isolated impotence within their barrack walls. It was a scheme of "peaceful penetration" of singular daring, and by reason of its very bloodlessness was succeeding with a celerity which drove the choleric soldiers and bureaucrats of Dublin Castle to distraction. The insufferable offence was that the Royal Irish Constabulary was mysteriously melting away under their eyes by voluntary resignation.

The shrewdest blow aimed at English rule by the Sinn Féin leaders was the disorganization of that redoubtable force. The Constabulary were the nerve-track by which Dublin Castle transmitted its orders to and received its information from the remotest parishes in the country; the network of espionage that penetrated every household; the army which had its detachment ready in every village to lay its heavy hand on the first stirrings of disaffection. It was assuredly the break-up of these village garrisons that eventually deprived the central government of its eyes and ears and hands, and the regular army forces which replaced them, irresistible though they were against armed opposition in the field, could but stagger about blindly in dealing with the hidden local forces respecting which the Constabulary could once have put them in possession of the most accurate particulars of place and persons. But it is a perversion of the truth to pretend that it was by violence and assassination the Royal Irish Constabulary was broken up. What dismayed the Castle authorities most was that, on the contrary, the process was throughout the years 1917 and 1918 a bloodless one.



working within the body like some obscure epidemic ; it sprang largely from the fact that the enthusiasm with which the rest of their countrymen were inflamed was infecting the younger and more generous-hearted of the Force, and no doubt, also, from the sharp pressure of local opinion upon their relatives in the country, and of those relatives themselves for whom it became an intolerable disgrace that men of their blood should stand in the way of the universal National uprising. It will be found that, long before the cruel individual assassinations that subsequently nearly decimated the Royal Irish Constabulary, some 2,500 of its best men had voluntarily resigned their connection with a service that had become hateful, and it was the dread that thousands more were on the point of imitating their example that drove the advisers of Sir Hamar Greenwood to endeavour to stop the *dégringolade* by flooding the Irish Force with the infamous "Black and Tans," and thereby involved the Constabulary in the hell of barbarities and reprisals through which the rest of their countrymen were forced to pass. History will establish it as one of the fundamental truths of those awful times that it was not the assassinations which brought the Black and Tans, but the Black and Tans who gave the signal for the assassinations, and that, of course, even the Black and Tans were less culpable than their paymasters.

There was another motive, baser still, for hastening to kill the process of peaceful self-determination before it was completed. In 1918 the General Election was pending. Sinn Féin was busy with its arrangements for a trial of strength on whose upshot it would depend whether or not Sinn Féin could speak as the authorized fiduciary of the nation. The old Hibernian Party was still no less busy, and was little less sanguine of its chances. The Hibernian successes in West Cork, Waterford and Armagh—the last that visited their



banners—had filled them with the most extravagant hopes. One need not assume that Mr. Dillon, who still retained some portion of the influence which had made him the principal adviser of the Castle before the Easter Week rebellion, had anything to say to the measures now taken by the official wirepullers. But the Hibernians still held 74 seats, and anything might happen at the polls. Accordingly, the Sinn Féin Director of Electioneering was snapped up, some of his principal assistants in the provinces were arrested and their confidential documents confiscated, and the most dreaded of the Sinn Féin candidates and organizers were kidnapped and shut up in Internment Camps. The General Election might still be saved, if the Sinn Féin election arrangements could be sufficiently dislocated and the electors properly overawed. It all turned out, as anybody except the Tapers and Tadpoles of politics might have known. It did not alter the fate of the Hibernians at the General Election, but it did help to cripple the pacifists in their way of working out self-determination and it made the war spirits of the I.R.A. the masters of the situation.

The revolution by which the Royal Irish Constabulary was silently falling to pieces and their places taken by a Volunteer police, under whose protection new Courts of Justice were administering impartial fair play to Unionist and Nationalist alike, and the local government of the country carried on with astonishing efficiency and with absolute incorruptibility, was in reality only the legitimate application of those principles of self-determination which England and her Allies had consecrated in the Treaty of Versailles, and it was the knowledge that the Government of the country was slipping away from them, without armed rebellion, by the mere organized enforcement of the people's will, that impelled the bureaucrats of Dublin Castle, since the crimeless will of the people was proving too



strong for them, to make the people's will itself the worst of crimes and let loose the dogs of war to put it down with bloody tooth and claw.

In May 1918 Lord Wimborne was succeeded by Lord French as Viceroy and Sir Edward Duke by Mr. Shortt as Chief Secretary. It was not until January in the following year that the first shot was fired in what came to be known as the "murder campaign" against the R.I.C. when two constables escorting a waggon of gelignite were killed near Tipperary. The only pretext for first launching the new policy of blood and iron was one which is now known to be, at the best, a mare's nest, and at the worst a wicked invention—viz., the fresh "German Plot" of 1918 which Field Marshal French proclaimed to England he had discovered, and on the strength of which the terrors of Martial Law were intensified and Mr. De Valera and Mr. Griffith deported to England from their seats at the Mansion House Conference against Conscription. The late Lord Lieutenant (Lord Wimborne) had never heard of "the Plot"; Sir Bryan Mahon, the Commander-in-Chief, we know on the authority of Colonel Repington's book told the new Viceroy (Lord French) he flatly disbelieved the story; when, after two years' refusal to produce the evidence on which it was based, the documents at last saw the light, they turned out to be a "crambe repetita" of negotiations which had taken place *before* the Rising of 1916 with some sham "German Irish Society" in Berlin. Under cover of this bogus alarm, without a shadow of evidence to connect Messrs. De Valera and Griffith with these antiquated treasons, they were deported to England without any form of trial, with many hundreds of the more responsible Sinn Féin leaders as well; newspapers were suppressed, public meetings broken up, and an endless series of prosecutions, followed by savage sentences, were instituted upon charges none of which involved bloodshed or armed



hostilities of any kind—charges of wearing green uniforms, drilling, singing “The Soldier’s Song,” being found in possession of photographs of the Rebel leaders, taking part in the Arbitration Courts, either as Arbitrators, solicitors or clients and the like. The campaign was originally undertaken while Field-Marshal French’s military operations for the enforcement of Conscription were complete, and in the fatuous hope that the removal of Messrs. De Valera and Griffith would break the back of the opposition. It was directed not against crime in any ordinary acceptation of the term, but against an intangible and omnipresent expression of the National will, which, however awkward for English military calculations, was directly authorized by President Wilson’s charter of democratic liberty which enabled England to win the war. Cruel deeds of violence will never be entirely missing from ebullitions of the most fervid passions of men in resistance to unscrupulous oppression ; but in general it was the very peacefulness of the revolution which was silently superseding English Government in all its functions, dissolving its police, transforming its Courts of Justice, baffling its Conscription Act and rallying the allegiance of the people with one consent to a new National Government—this was the phenomenon which roused the ire of the Courtsmartial, and prompted the blunder-headed soldier at the Viceregal Lodge to strike harder and harder as he found his wild sabre-strokes against the will of a nation were in vain. The point to be retained is that it was many months after Sinn Féin had been deprived of its leaders and harried by a thousand persecutions of mere opinion and sentiment now confessed by England to be irrepressible, before the civic side of Sinn Féin was overborne, and the Irish Republican Army gradually allowed themselves to be goaded into a war of guerillas.

A tremendous bribe of doubled and in some



categories trebled pay staunched the flow of resignations in the Royal Irish Constabulary and stimulated the zeal of those who remained to earn promotion by the least reputable services against their countrymen. Nevertheless, although the Sinn Féin leaders were now driven more fixedly than ever to the conclusion that in striking at the R.I.C. they were striking at the brain and life-centre of English rule, the first months of the guerilla war were still free from the stain of individual assassinations, arsons and barbarities in which both sides were before long vieing. Considerable bodies of policemen and military who were captured in ambushes and in attacks upon police barracks were treated with soldierly courtesy, and their wives and children rescued from positions of danger. The members of the Dublin Metropolitan Police had no sooner refused to go about armed than they were left free from molestation throughout all the subsequent wars. It was not until an officer in high command made a round of the country Constabulary stations, and harangued the younger men in terms which had their first practical repercussion in the Thurles district of Tipperary, where constables maddened with drink dragged local Sinn Féiners from their beds and murdered them and set fire to their homes, that the 'Thurles police "reprisals" following the two murders near Tipperary began to be avenged by "counter-reprisals" no less savage on the other side. The mass of the rank and file, however, continued to be Irishmen of too humane and Godfearing a character to be trusted as the executioners of atrocities like these upon men of their own blood and creed. The ferocity on both sides only reached a pitch never witnessed in Ireland before when Sir Hamar Greenwood hit upon the expedient of importing "the Black and Tans" to take the places of the resigning R.I.C. and to infect with their own villainy the most evil elements left behind in the Irish Force.



These unemployables of the demobilised army were in general desperadoes of the vilest type, ready for any deed of blood which their free license from Dublin Castle might present to them, and so true to their depraved origin that, not content with their wages of a guinea a day, they were not above snatching the purse of the wife of General Strickland, the Military Governor of Cork, in the principal street of that City. Whenever the detailed record of their operations comes to be drawn up, it will constitute a more ignoble chapter of murder, devastation, robbery and cruelty—mostly against defenceless elders, women and children—than all the black generations of Carews, Cromwells and Carhamptons had been able to contribute in the course of seven centuries to England's annals in Ireland.

To pile up evidence of the atrocities brought home to the military forces of the Crown would be to harrow the feelings of the humane to an insufferable degree and perhaps to do the English nation in general the injustice of imputing to them complicity in horrors which shall however long live to the shame of their responsible Ministers. It must suffice to give one sample out of thousands upon an authority that cannot be impeached. It is taken from the considered judgment of Judge Bodkin, who had been for fourteen years the respected Co. Court Judge of Clare, and whose fearless judicial calm, in face of armed force and baser official threats, forms one of the brightest records of that dire time :

“ It was proved before me, on sworn evidence in open Court, that on the night of September 22nd, the town of Lahinch was attacked by a large body of armed forces of the Government. Rifle shots were fired apparently at random in the streets and a very large number of houses and shops were broken into, set on fire, and their contents looted or destroyed. The inhabitants, most of them in their night clothes, men,



women and children, invalids, old people over eighty, and children in arms, were compelled, at a moment's notice and at peril of their lives, to fly through back doors and windows to the sandhills in the neighbourhood of the town where they remained during the night, returning in the morning to find their homes completely destroyed. In the course of this attack a man, named Joseph Sammon, was shot dead. There were in all before me 38 claims for the criminal injuries committed on that occasion, and after full consideration of the claims I awarded a total sum of over £65,000.

"On the same night the town of Ennistymon was similarly invaded by the armed forces of the Government, shots were fired in the streets, the town hall and a large number of houses and shops were broken into, set on fire, and, with their contents, destroyed. As in Lahinch, the inhabitants were compelled to fly for their lives. A young married man, named Connole, was seized in the street, by a party of men under command of an officer. His wife, who was with him, pleaded on her knees with the officer for the life of her husband, but he was taken away a short distance, shot, and his charred remains were found next morning in his own house, which had been burnt. Another young man, named Linnane, was shot dead in the streets while attempting to extinguish the flames. For the criminal injuries committed in the progress of this attack there were 13 claims, and I awarded upwards of £39,000 compensation.

"On the same night the town of Miltown Malbay was similarly invaded by the armed forces of the Government. A large number of houses and shops were broken into, set on fire and destroyed, the inhabitants escaping with difficulty and danger. An old woman named Lynch proved that during the course of this raid, just before the burning of her house, her husband (an old man of 75), while standing beside her at her own doorway, was shot dead by a



soldier in uniform, distant about ten yards. She made no claim for the murder of her husband. I awarded £414 for the destruction of her home and property. It is right to add that in this town some of the Military and Police endeavoured to extinguish the flames. There were before me in respect of the raid of Miltown Malbay 28 claims, and I awarded upwards of £45,000.

“A farmer named Daniel Egan applied to me for compensation for the alleged murder of his son. It was proved that a number of men arrested his son, and three other men, at his residence on the shores of Lough Derg, bound them with ropes and carried them away in a boat. The next the father heard of his son was a telegram from the police informing him that he had been shot on the bridge at Killaloe, and directing him to come to Killaloe for the corpse. On going to the police station he found his son's dead body in a coffin. There was a number of military and police present, but the only one he knew was District Inspector Gwynne. I allowed the case to stand for a week for the production of the District Inspector. The District Inspector did not appear, and I adjourned the case to next Sessions.”

The reply of the Chief Secretary to Judge Bodkin's Report was to have him served in Court by the Co. Inspector of the Royal Irish Constabulary with the following notice :

“To His Honor Judge Bodkin.

“Sir, I have been directed by the Commander of the Forces to prohibit Courts of Justice dealing with claims for compensation involving allegations against the Crown forces or police in this area.”

And the Judge's observation is :

“On taking my place on the Bench I observed a large armed force in the Court, apparently for the purpose of enforcing the prohibition. I adjourned to next Sessions all cases in which it was alleged that



the criminal injuries were committed by the armed forces of the Government."

But the guilt of the scurvy rogues now let loose upon Ireland was a small matter when measured with that of their Ministerial paymasters. What the Government sanctimoniously called "reprisals" were, as we have seen, their way of avenging themselves for the collapse of Conscription and the realization of Self-Determination without their leave. They deliberately resolved to treat this phenomenon of National self-liberation by the mere force of natural justice as the crime of a murder-gang and to stamp it out by unloosing the worst ruffians they could hire upon the country at free quarters and to turn a blind eye to their enormities or deny them altogether until their hellish work was done. It is not necessary to assume that Mr. Lloyd George and Sir Hamar Greenwood acquainted themselves fully with the character of the agents they were employing; their culpability was that they did not inquire for themselves until the experiment failed and their boasts that they "had Sinn Féin on the run" and "had the murder-gang by the throat" were turned to their ridicule as prophets as well as to their confusion in the eyes of a conscience-stricken England. One small piece of evidence would be in itself sufficient to stain Mr. Lloyd George with responsibility for the deeds of the Black and Tans. It was a newspaper photograph representing an inspection by the Prime Minister of a contingent of these worthies at a time when their ill-fame was at its worst and when Ireland was supposed to be cowering in terror under their bloody lash. The smirk of admiration on Mr. Lloyd George's face as he surveyed their ruffian ranks gives as damning testimony of his feelings as if he had shouted to them through a megaphone: "You are the boys for my money. Go in and win!"

Sir Hamar Greenwood's ignorance of a country



where he had never trod until he came to crucify her might in some degree excuse his original employment of the Black and Tans : the most indulgent historian will look in vain for any palliation of the mendacity which he made his principal instrument of government, so long as it was possible to cover up their crimes. The Lord Mayor of Cork, Thomas MacCurtin, was visited at midnight by one of those black bands, summoned out of bed and foully murdered in the sight of his wife and children. Sir Hamar Greenwood blandly assured the House of Commons on the authority of the assassins that the Lord Mayor was murdered by his own Sinn Féin associates, and the fact that he was as consistent a hater of foul play in any shape as he was ever the first to risk his life for his principles was actually quoted in support of the atrocious suggestion that it was for his moderation the Lord Mayor was slaughtered by his own comrades. The citizens who had murdered their own beloved Lord Mayor gave him a public funeral which was a spectacle of universal mourning the most impressive that was ever beheld there and raised a subscription of £23,000 for his widow and children. Still Sir Hamar Greenwood never blenched.

Later on when the Curfew was sternly enforced, and nobody in the streets except the Army of Occupation, the most valuable warehouses in the main thoroughfare of Cork, Patrick St., were set on fire with petroleum by five separate gangs of incendiaries, the houses burned to the ground with carefully organized efficiency, and hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of property destroyed or looted. At the same time, in another part of the city, the Town Hall was invaded by the petroleurs and given to the flames, and the Carnegie Free Library adjoining was added to the holocaust. Once more Sir Hamar Greenwood, with forehead of brass, arose in the House of Commons to declare that it was the Sinn



Féiners themselves who had burned the fairest part of their city and razed to the ground the headquarters of their local government. In order to give some air of verisimilitude to his theory that the latter incident was an accidental one, he explained that the flames from the Sinn Féiners' operations in Patrick St. had extended to the Municipal Buildings before the area of conflagration could be limited. The truth was that the Town Hall and the Free Library were situate nearly a mile away from Patrick St., with a river and a dense network of untouched streets between them and the burnt area of Patrick St. from which the Chief Secretary represented they had caught fire. The lie, gross as a mountain, was good enough for the House of Commons and was never cleared up nor apologised for. The origin of the attempt to burn down Cork was indeed ordered to be investigated at a secret military inquiry by General Strickland, the Governor of the City. All demands for the publication of the text of the Strickland report, or even of its conclusions, were resisted by Sir Hamar Greenwood. To this hour an ignorant England accepts the legend that it was the miscreant Sinn Féiners themselves who murdered their Lord Mayor, burnt down their Town Hall, plundered and gave to the flames the wealthiest region of their city, and all because the Report of the Military Governor on these infamies was successfully suppressed, if it was not itself committed to the flames as well by England's highest ministers. What inference the Black and Tans themselves drew from their Chief Secretary's intrepidity in covering up their wildest falsifications as his own may be judged from the fact that the men well known to have been the incendiaries were no sooner removed from Cork, as the one concession made to General Strickland's expostulations than they in cold blood murdered Canon Magner, the parish priest of Dunmanway—perhaps the least politically-minded man of his race—



and went within an ace of murdering a Resident Magistrate, Mr. Brady, R.M., who happened to be an inconvenient witness of the butchery. Two successive Mayors of Limerick—Mr. O'Callaghan and Mr. Clancy—were, like their colleague in Cork shot dead in their homes in presence of their horrified wives; once again, the cynic in the Irish Office adopted from the assassins their loathsome plea that the slaughter of the Mayors of Limerick was the work of their brother Sinn Féiners, and that it was because of their very nobleness of character their fellow-citizens had slain them. It was not even lying reduced to a fine art: it was lying naked, boisterous and unashamed.

These are not isolated instances of the Greenwood method of government; they are samples of a system widely practised and unblushingly persisted in. If he had been impeached for crimes against public liberty no less heinous than Warren Hastings was summoned to answer for, the verdict could scarcely have been otherwise than that his audacity in concealing and perverting the truth carried with it a deeper shame than the worst enormities of the poor hirelings, whom it must be bluntly stated, he stimulated by his incitements and sheltered by his unlimited lying. The first and the worst offence of the Black and Tans in the eyes of Mr. Lloyd George or of Sir Hamar Greenwood was that they failed. No pit of official ignorance in which these personages may take refuge is deep enough to bury the ugly fact out of sight.



## CHAPTER XXVII

## A PEACE OFFER THAT WAS SPURNED

WE have now seen the two successive modes of aggression upon Sinn Féin—that of pinpricks under Mr. Shortt and Mr. Macpherson, and that of uncontrolled ferocity under Sir Hamar Greenwood—in operation. While his faith in the virtues of the Black and Tans was still strong, Mr. Lloyd George resolved to extract one permanent result from the White Terror, and to make his old project for the division of Ireland into two provinces an accomplished fact. This he achieved by his Government of Ireland Act of 1920. It was carried without the support of a single vote from any section of representatives of the country of which it was to be the Act of Liberation stipulated for in President Wilson's Fourteen Points. The Act was equally detestable to North and South and was imposed upon both by main force. But to Sir Edward Carson it gave the satisfaction of a legislative acknowledgment once for all of the Two-Nations theory and to the Parliamentarians of the old Hibernian school it was enough to answer that the Act did precisely what they had themselves covenanted to do by their Headings of Agreement in 1916—namely, to separate the Six Counties from Nationalist Ireland.

The six Hibernian members of Parliament saved by the Northern Bishops from the wreckage of the General Election did everything that feeble inefficiency could do in the new Parliament to justify the Irish revolt against Parliamentary action. Their first master-stroke, having just been ruined by their



enslavement to one English Party, was formally to enslave themselves to another—the English Labour Party, and to throw over the remnant of the unfortunate Liberals, because they were only a remnant. But under a leader of capacity, they might still have mustered a formidable opposition of Labourites, “Wee Frees,” gallant democratic friends of freedom like Commander Kenworthy and Captain Wedgwood Benn, and young Conservatives such as Lord George Bentinck, Mr. Aubrey Herbert, Mr. Moseley, and in a growing degree Lord Robert Cecil, who might have kept the House of Commons ringing with the atrocities in Ireland and obstructed, if not finally baffled, the Bill for the Partition of their nation. Parnell did such things as one of a group as small and without the support of half a dozen Englishmen. It was not merely that a Parnell of the first rate or of the fifth rate was missing. The trouble was that the sins of their days of power were haunting the Hibernians. What was Mr. Devlin to say in serious protest against a Bill which enacted that very surrender of the Six Counties to which his Party had solemnly consented, and which he in person, at the Belfast Convention, had thrust down the throats of the hypnotised Nationalists of the Six Counties themselves? That feat of inconsistency, however, would not have in itself overtaken his powers. He took a course in reference to the Bill as fatal to his reputation as a tactician as to his loyalty to principle. He withdrew himself and his Labour and Liberal friends from the Committee stage of the Bill, where they might have had their best chance of thwarting it, and only returned for the harmless formality of the Third Reading to declare in a speech of threadbare high heroics—he, the high priest of the Belfast Convention—that “they were face to face with a grave attempt to destroy the unity of their motherland, but they would meet that danger with courage and with incomparable



resolution. They stood for freedom for Ireland, undivided and indivisible." "Partition," he finally described as "midsummer madness—rotten before it was born." In the meantime he was to find that in his absence and that of his friends, the more *terre à terre* Covenanters to whom he had handed over the Six Counties, had in Committee gerrymandered the constituencies of North East Ulster to their sweet will, and added two Orange Wards to his own constituency of the Falls Road, thereby ensuring his ejection from the Imperial Parliament at the General Election. In the last stage of his decadence the paladin, who had once summoned the police and military to make a ring for him in Belfast for a fight to a finish with the Orangemen, quitted Belfast as soon as he was taken at his word, and his constituents were falling by the hundred under the bullets of the unloosed Orangemen, and he subsided thenceforth into the poor role of "asking questions," feebler and ever feebler at Westminster. The only personage of any consequence in the group, Mr. T. P. O'Connor, confined his attention to the atrocities of the Black-and-Tans of Turkey in Armenia and with tears in his voice gave to that interesting people the eloquence he would once have devoted to the Bashibazouks of Sir Hamar Greenwood.

We may be fairly challenged to name our own exploits in the emergency. Frankly, they were none. Unlike the Hibernian leaders who on the morrow of their overthrow at the polls predicted that "before six months" there would come a Reaction which would re-establish their power, the All-for-Ireland League, as a corporate power, had definitely ceased to exist before the General Election. For fifteen years, we had fought the losing battle against the ever growing power of a corrupt Hibernian ascendancy to prevent the majority of our countrymen from hearing anything except the most fantastic misrepresentations



of our views and actions. We had an unshaken conviction that time was bound to vindicate, as the only stable basis of a benign National settlement, an agreement by consent of every element of strength, Gaelic or Norman or British, Catholic or Protestant, Democratic or Conservative, which constituted the actual Irish nation, such as History had bequeathed it to us, as opposed to the destructive programme of everlasting enmity towards "our hereditary enemies," "the black-blooded Cromwellians," "the Orange dogs," and "the rotten Protestants," in pursuance of which a majority of the constituencies tragically ignorant of what they were being led to do, had repulsed every conciliatory advance from far-sighted Protestant Irishmen and forced a million of their countrymen to hail Sir E. Carson as their deliverer. The vindication of our measures for allaying the fears of the Protestant minority and our unconquerable aversion to Partition had, indeed, come already, and was to be within a few years acknowledged by every school and section of Irish Nationalists, including our most bitter maligners and by every English Party as well, who eventually found salvation around the conference-table of which we had set them the example fifteen years before at the Land Conference. We had lived to receive the admission of the Prime Minister that we were "fundamentally right," and were presently to hear the head of the new Revolutionary movement, Mr. De Valera, protest as passionately as ourselves his devotion to the rights of "our hereditary enemies" who had given us our Grattans and Wolfe Tones and Emmets, and to find the President of the new "Irish Free State," Mr. Arthur Griffith, in his first proclamation, publish our doctrines of unwearying conciliation of the Protestant minority as the foundation-stone of his Government. We were to have the consolation such as it was of finding the Irish Hierarchy publishing in 1922 (eight years too late, alas !) their solemn judgment that "the



deadly effect of Partition has been to ruin Ireland"—the Partition which was unanimously consented to by the Hibernian Parliamentary Party, and for making the sole protest against which (while there was still time to avert the catastrophe) we were anathematised as traitors.

But we had no longer any power to hasten the consummation of the enlightened principles soon to be crowned with universal assent. Nay, it was certain that our disappearance would be the surest means of removing the last obstacle to their triumph, by removing all pretext for the old jealousies, and leaving the new generation unfettered to follow up the good work in the plenitude of their fresh energies and springtime hopes. *Sic vos non vobis* seems to pronounce irrevocably the fate of the pioneers and we cheerfully bowed to the decree. On the other hand, even if our collaboration had been invited (and it never was) we should have shrunk from the responsibility of flinging our young countrymen all but weaponless, against the colossal armaments of England under conditions of which we knew nothing. All the more, that we were still persuaded, Parliamentary methods had proved ineffective, not because they were the Parliamentary methods of Parnell, but because they were not, but were the methods of corrupt bargain and sale which had sacrificed the interests of the nation to those of an English Party. But the new men were the solitary hope of redeeming the country from a state of political rottenness which moved Mr. T. P. O'Connor himself to cry out that the place-hunting members of Parliament "were making a commonage" of Mr. Birrell's room in the House of Commons, and if they were to be trusted at all must be armed with all the undivided strength the nation could give them. To the new men, consequently, it became our cardinal principle to secure the same generous mandate which had been given to Parnell against the less degenerate



followers of Butt and under no circumstances to say or do aught that could enfeeble their arm.

On two occasions only, up to the date of the Truce, was our silence broken. The first was when a protest in the *Times* was wrung from me by the devastation of our own little town of Mallow. In the rage of the Crown forces under a defeat which was a perfectly legitimate act of war, they turned a place which had been a sylvan Arcadia of peace and mutual tolerance into a furnace of vengeful passions on both sides in which the nights grew horrid around us with the rattle of gunfire, the crash of bridges blown into the air and the glare of burning mansions and of burning cabins. My only other intervention was one that seemed to be forced upon me as an elementary duty of humanity as well as patriotism. While the war was already furiously raging and spreading, but before it had yet nearly reached its climax, I received a communication from one of Mr. De Valera's most intimate confidants—although not, so far as I know at his desire, or, perhaps, even with his knowledge—which could leave no room for doubt that peace might at that moment be had on terms which would have spared the country two years of appalling bloodshed and sufferings and which Mr. Lloyd George would have paid a kingdom's ransom two years later if he could go back to. The substance of that communication I took the responsibility of communicating to the Prime Minister in a correspondence which will speak for itself, and which there is no longer any reason for withholding :

*Confidential and Secret.*

July 5, 1919.

Dear Mr. Lloyd George,—

Enclosed extract may be relied upon as indicating what the attitude of Sinn Féin will be towards any definite offer of Dominion Home Rule. For that



reason, and because I can guarantee the writer's good faith and very special sources of information, I consider it a duty to send it to you. From his report it may be deduced with certainty that Sinn Féin will not block the way of any offer of New Zealand or Newfoundland Home Rule provided (1) that it comes from the Government itself, (2) with a guarantee that if accepted by an Irish Referendum it will be put into operation and (3) that neither the *Times* nor Sir H. Plunkett is allowed to exploit the concession to the prejudice of the elected representatives of Ireland, whose concurrence (tacit if not active) will be essential if any practicable settlement is to be effected within my time or even within yours. I will not waste your time adding another pebble to your mountain of glory: there is only one triumph more amazing and more blessed you could have and it would be in Ireland.

Sincerely yours,

WILLIAM O'BRIEN.

The Rt. Hon. D. Lloyd George, M.P.,  
Prime Minister.

(Enclosed Extract).

*Confidential and Secret.*

‘I have had an opportunity of seeing——, who is a really fast friend of ours and is the right-hand man of Mr. De V. I have also met a large number of leading people in Dublin and the country and I'm quite convinced that 99 per cent. of the Sinn Féin body would gladly accept Dominion Home Rule as a settlement, but will have nothing to do with Plunkett's



scheme or with any other scheme of the same nature until such time as the Government place all their cards on the table.

"I am agreeably surprised at the good sense displayed by the people, and the most determined of the young men as well as the more experienced. There is more common sense and more resolution than was ever before known in our history. Every person I met was willing to close with an honest Dominion Settlement, including all but a handful of the extremist Volunteers, but all are determined not to give way one inch until something concrete is before the country.

"There was near being a serious split in the S.F. camp a few weeks ago. It was learned that the Government intended to suppress by force any meeting of the Sinn Féin M.P.s. The leaders agreed to abandon any public meeting for the present. To this the Volunteers strongly objected, stating their men were prepared to make any sacrifice in defence of the right of the Dáil to meet in public. However the matter was got over through the influence of Mr. De Valera with the extreme men.

"I asked would the Volunteers give the same trouble if Mr. De Valera accepted Dominion Home Rule. He assured me they most certainly would not, but on the contrary would be perfectly reasonable. But they must first be sure the Government mean business and that there would be no more foolery either at home or in America. Failing that confidence they are ready for anything and so is the country. Dillon and his crowd are dead and gone.

"If the country had only shown the same sense a few years ago, all would have been so different. However, it is a consolation to know they have at long last learned a sound lesson in the school of experience. If they are honestly dealt with, all will be well, but God help the Government that will try any further tricks on them."



*Private and Confidential.*

CRICCIETH,

14th July, 1919.

Dear Mr. O'Brien,—

I thank you for sending me the interesting extract on the attitude of Sinn Féin towards Dominion Home Rule. There is nothing I would like better than to carry through any measure which would terminate the long, dreary and baffling feud between Britain and Ireland. Frankly, I am not in a very hopeful mood. I have made two or three attempts, and when they seemed to be on the point of success—accomplishment eluded one. That seems to me to have been the experience of almost every man who has striven to settle the Irish question. I think you were fundamentally right when you sought an agreement amongst all sections, creeds and classes of Irishmen. I am afraid settlement is impossible until that has been achieved. All parties in Britain, Liberal, Unionist, Labour, are equally pledged through their leaders not to coerce Ulster into the acceptance of any measure of autonomy which would have to be forced on the population of that Province. On the other hand, Irish Nationalists are equally pledged not to accept any settlement which would not put Ulster into the same position as Munster or Connaught. How are you to reconcile these inconsistent positions? Home Rule is within the reach of Nationalist Ireland the moment it extends its hand, but if Nationalist Ireland says she will not have Home Rule unless she can have Ulster, with or without her will, then I am afraid a settlement is remote.

The Sinn Féin attitude during the war has not made matters easier. No British Statesman could coerce Ulster in order to place it forcibly under the control of De Valera and the men who were undoubtedly intriguing with the Germans to stab Britain



in the back at the very moment when Germany was making a special effort to overwhelm her armies in France. I very much regret having to say this for I have always been a consistent supporter of every Home Rule Bill introduced into the House of Commons during the past 30 years. But it is no use ignoring facts. I know you to be a man of supreme courage and therefore prepared to face unpalatable truths.

Ever sincerely,

LOYD GEORGE.

William O'Brien, Esq.

*Private and Confidential.*

July 19, 1919.

Dear Mr. Lloyd George,—

Before you finally make up your mind to the most lamentable decision to which you are tending, there are a few considerations which I would ask you to weigh well.

1. If I was “fundamentally right” in struggling for the conciliation of “Ulster,” it is not wise to forget that these efforts were steadily ignored by a Liberal Home Rule Government while Sir E. Carson’s men were declaring in the House of Commons that it was still possible to win the consent of Ulster. No concession of any kind was offered, until at the last and under threat of rebellion there was offered the one inadmissible and impossible concession—that of Partition and the whole object of the Home Rule Bill sacrificed.

2. That Partition was offered with the concurrence of the late Irish Party is no argument against the Irish people, who, the moment they got the chance, and mainly on account of their acceptance of Partition, annihilated that Party at the polls.

3. Irish resentment is only exasperated by the allegation that “the Irish Convention failed to agree to a settlement.” As you may possibly remember, I



pointed out to you at the time, 90 out of 100 members of the Convention were pledged to Partition (which only for the Sinn Féin victories of East Clare and Kilkenny they would certainly have fallen back upon). The Convention represented everybody except the Irish people, as is proved by the fact that not three Nationalist members of the Convention could obtain election by any constituency in the country. On the other hand, you have only to refer to the class of names I suggested for a Conference of ten or twelve known friends of peace to make sure they would have come to an agreement, and that, on a Referendum, their agreement would have been accepted by as large a majority as it is possible for any country to show upon any contested issue. That way, and that way alone, a settlement still lies.

4. The argument as to Sinn Féin having "stabbed England in the back" is only worthy of Sir E. Carson, whose preparations for his own rebellion were far more responsible for England's troubles with Germany. It must be remembered that the Easter Week Rising was a reaction from the failure of forty years of earnest petitioning for peace on the part of the Irish people, culminating with the proposal of Partition, which is as intolerable to Ireland as a proposal of peace would be to France on condition of the alienation of one-fourth of her territory. If Sinn Féin had stooped to a real policy of treachery, they would have flooded your army with Irish recruits, and by wholesale desertion in battle have imitated the desertions from the Austrian Army of her Bohemian, Croatian, Rumanian, and Italian subjects, to whom you have given liberty as their reward for their rebellions.

5. Nationalists are not pledged to a policy of "putting Ulster in the same position as Munster or Connaught." On the contrary, they are ready with one voice now to concede to Ulster the special terms



my friends and myself struggled for all along—terms which would secure her all but half the votes in an Irish Parliament. They would probably accept, further, some such exceptional appeal to the Imperial Parliament for a limited time as we proposed six years ago. Any conceivable danger of oppression would now be met by an appeal to the League of Nations, who will have a jurisdiction in the affairs of minorities much larger than the “Ulster” minorities who have been incorporated in the new States of Poland, Bohemia, Servia, and the Italian Tyrol.

6. If the offer of unqualified Dominion Home Rule for all Ireland were propounded even now on the responsibility of the Government and accepted by an overwhelming majority—even in Ulster itself—on Referendum, it is not conceivable, especially if the verdict of Great Britain were obtained at a General Election, that physical force would be necessary to obtain obedience to the law.

I am too old to be any longer of much account, but it would be a wrong to the two countries to conceal from you my conviction that if the reasonableness of the most influential leaders of Sinn Féin be now spurned and nothing done, so long as Sir E. Carson bars the way, you will leave many millions of the new generation of Irishmen at home and in America and Australia with no alternative but to place their hopes in England’s difficulties either through perilous rivalries with America or in some Socialist revolution at home in some paralysis of English trade. You will not, I hope, complain if I have been free spoken in offering advice of a sort which up to the present has not often turned out to be astray in the affairs of Ireland.

“Sincerely yours,

“WILLIAM O’BRIEN.

“Rt. Hon. D. Lloyd George, M.P.,  
Prime Minister.”



“ If they are honestly dealt with, all will be well, but God help the Government that will try any further tricks on them ! ” It was the complete manual of wisdom in the matter, but the manual was placed under the eyes of the blind. Plainly, it was the incorrigible British fault all over again : Mr. Lloyd George read the first hint of good will on Mr. De Valera’s part as a sign that he was a beaten man. As likely as not, he concluded that he had caught Mr. De Valera and myself in a conspiracy to balk him of the victory already in the hands of the Black and Tans. Here was the small smartness which so often marred his imaginative greatness as a statesman. Had he at that time honestly opened negotiations for peace, he would have avoided most of the difficulties which were later to imperil everything when the Irish Republic had to be dealt with as an accomplished fact. The Dáil had not yet been formally called together : its members had not yet sworn the solemn oath of allegiance to the Irish Republic which it thenceforth became the principal difficulty of delicate minds to recall. It seems certain that Mr. De Valera’s scruples about arranging the terms of an “ external association ” with the Empire would never have assumed their subsequent seriousness, and that the vast bulk of the nation would have welcomed peace in ecstasy. Nevertheless, in the very letter in which he acknowledges that I was “ fundamentally right ” (and consequently he himself fundamentally wrong) in the advice I had for years been tendering, the Prime Minister once more rejects my counsels, will talk of nothing except the old bitterness of Easter Week, and the failure of his own precious specific of “ The Irish Convention,” and obviously dismisses the subject with the comfortable feeling that his own policy of the Black Hand was winning.



## CHAPTER XXVIII

## THE BLACK AND TANS

FORCED by England's deliberate plan from its quiet administration of Corporations and Co. Councils, its Arbitration Courts and peaceful picketing of the Royal Irish Constabulary, to fight for its life, Sinn Féin at last stood on its guard and fought. Since young David took up his sling to tackle Goliath never seemed there so unequal a match. Between regulars, policemen and naval ratings, England disposed of an army of 100,000 of the best equipped troops in the world, being at least one armed soldier for every able-bodied man of the population in the eight or ten counties to which the burden of the battle was confined. Against this host there was arrayed no visible force of any kind except bands of half-drilled youngsters, without so much as a field piece, with the scantiest equipment even of rifles, with no really serviceable weapons at all except revolvers to confront the heavy artillery, the tanks and armoured cars massed against them under famous generals fresh from their victory over German armies counted by millions. Before the revolution which the World-War made in methods of warfare as in the whole structure of civilization, no Irishman outside a padded-cell could have dreamed of pitting these parcels of raw youths in the open field against the ironclad might of England. By a curious irony it was a war in which the armaments of England surpassed tenfold any in her history that caused Ireland, Egypt and India to laugh at her colossal military power, and it was after the war, on its great fields, had been triumphantly concluded that



her armies were covered with disgrace and shame by a Young Ireland furnished with weapons little more dangerous than blackthorns. It was, of course, solely because the principle of the sacredness of the liberties of the small nationalities on which she had been forced to fight the war, if she were to obtain the aid of America, now interposed its veto against the annihilation of Ireland by her militarist armies, and the fine chivalry with which she had egged on or rewarded with their National Freedom the rebels of the Austrian, the Russian and the Turkish empires, was now retorted upon herself and withered her arm when she came to deal with the Poles, and Tcheco-Slovaques and Jougo-Slaves of her own Empire.

Mr. Lloyd George, however, stripped England of all the credit she might have had if she had of her own motion added Ireland to the constellation of free nations it was her boast to have set shining by the Treaty of Versailles. He took a course which digged a new gulf of hatred between the two islands, he tore open centuried wounds which were all but healed. He tortured the patient nation-builders of the original Sinn Féin programme out of their peacefulness and he supplanted them with the Irish Republican Army. He affected to mistake a world-wide race for a murder-gang, and never gave up the policy of "frightfulness" and insult by which he calculated upon cowing them, until he had kindled them into a war of liberty which was the admiration of the world, and until the beaten bully was reduced to suing for a visit to his Cabinet Room at Downing St. from the most noted of the murder-gang. It was not, however, until he had first compelled the tortured nation for two years to undergo a sweat of blood. This is not the place to relate the history of events, *quorum pars minima fui*—which I was compelled to witness in blank and helpless inaction and of which the recital must be left to those with a better title to write from first hand information. Two



things it may safely be affirmed will appear with more certainty the more searchingly the investigations hitherto forbidden are pushed home—there will be found no page in England's story more shameful than the War of the Black and Tans, and none in which the fortitude of the youth of Ireland and their idealism as lofty if sometimes also as cloudy as our Irish skies will figure more proudly in the eyes of their posterity.

The Irish Republican Army could not hold the open field for an hour against ten thousand regular troops ; they nevertheless succeeded in worrying an army of a hundred thousand out of the country. Battalions without end poured into the remotest villages, without any visible resistance to their armoured cars and great artillery ; but the practical results of their occupation vanished as promptly as the fortifications built by children on the foreshore, to be quietly swallowed up by the next tide. Not less unchainable was the ocean that swelled around their barrack-walls, for its ebb and flow was moved by the two primeval attractive forces that agitate the soul of the multitudinous Irish race—the Spirit of Liberty and the Spirit of Religion. The nation was seized by a holy fire such as inflamed the first Crusaders at the call of Peter the Hermit. The Republican army into which the young men flocked was not more truly an army than a great religious Confraternity as fanatical as the processions of the White Penitents which traversed Europe in the Middle Ages. They went into fire or mounted the scaffold with the placid conscience of those who have received Extreme Unction and are about to step straight into Heaven. Not only had death no terrors for the finest among them ; they courted it and insisted upon it as the most precious of honours, and that with the modesty of true heroes. Kevin Barry, a medical student of 16, who was hanged for an attack on a military lorry in one of the streets of Dublin, was a perfectly fair specimen of the Republican



recruit. Two days before his execution, the boy met some of his comrades in the prison-yard at Mountjoy, and was permitted to shake hands with them. As they parted, his dying speech was : " Well, good bye, boys : I'm off on Monday !"—that and nothing more. Death, even under what might well seem to the young soldier ignominious conditions, was too much a matter of course to waste words about. Against happy warriors such as he—who recited their Rosaries or sang their " Soldier's-Song " with equal fervour—who appeared and disappeared on the track of the British troops with the mysterious facility of Ariel—who accepted sentence of penal servitude or death without answering a word in recognition of England's Courts-martial—who even in the depths of the English prisons where they were entombed carried on the war as stoutly as ever, raised barricades and engaged their torturers with bare fists, escaped over the prison walls under the eyes of their jailors, died of hunger by inches, rather than acknowledge any criminal taint, held their dances in the intervals of their ambushes in their mountain bivouacs and in all these wild years never laid an irreverent hand upon a woman, or tasted intoxicating drink, or bred a single informer in their ranks—against the spirit of ten thousand Kevin Barrys, the garrisons of the armoured cars might as well discharge their great guns against the heavens.

More amazing even than the fanaticism of the Republican Army was the genius with which their operations were conducted. Nobody knew who were the men in command. Nobody knows for certain even yet. The young clerks and schoolmasters and artisans like Michael Collins, Cathal Brugha, Richard Mulcahy and Major General McKeown, " the blacksmith of Ballinalee," who are now the legendary heroes of the fights were at that time unknown even by name outside their secret council-chambers. But General Macready and the most acute of his staff officers were



the first to recognise the military genius of the anonymous captains who lay in wait for them and baffled them—the accuracy with which their plans were worked out to their smallest particular—the versatility with which, as soon as one mode of attack was exploded, they turned to another and a more provokingly ingenious one—the ruthless punctuality with which they answered “reprisals” by “counter reprisals”—the methodical precision with which the account for the hanging of six soldiers of the Republic in one morning in Cork was squared by the shooting of six soldiers of England the same evening in the same city—and the cheerfulness with which they took their punishment whenever even native wits like theirs were no match for the overpowering army against which their revolvers and shot guns were pitted. As the plot thickened, savage crimes began to dog the march of the Republicans as well as of the Black-and-Tans. *A la guerre comme à la guerre!* was spoken by the most chivalric of the war-nations; war is always and everywhere a hideous and bloodguilty thing obeying its law of nature which is to beat the enemy into subjection by whatever brutalies it may. But these were only the rare blots upon a guerilla war which would have been the admiring wonder of England and the enthusiastic theme of her poets had it been waged against any power in the world except her own—a guerilla war as gallant as that which drove the French out of Spain more effectually than Wellington’s Army—waged against far more terrific odds than that of the Greeks which excited Byron’s lyric raptures—and perhaps with more scrupulous weapons than those employed against Austria by Mazzini whom, as these lines are written, Mr. Lloyd George has been extolling as “the greatest name in the history of Italy”—the name of Dante himself being forgotten, if ever heard of.

The Black-and-Tans for their part, if they were less resourceful in wit, made up for their inferiority



by a brutality run mad. Whatever atrocities the jack-booted Germans committed in the first weeks of their occupation of Belgium, the Black-and-Tans committed and improved upon for a year and a half during their Satanic reign in Ireland. They roamed through the country by night in their armoured cars bellowing with drunken fury in search of vengeance for some successful ambush or captured barrack : set fire to defenceless villages or blew them up with bombs ; flogged, tortured and murdered without ceremony the men whenever they could find them, under conditions too loathsome to be particularized ; whenever the men were missing, they extorted their last penny from the terror of the women, outraged them with drunken obscenities more hateful than their flourished revolvers, and left with a whole generation of Irish children memories of their midnight devilries more horrible than any Dante could imagine for his *Inferno*. For the bare offence of being found in possession of revolvers men were hanged, and the statesmen who hanged them were shocked to find that the hangings were followed by vengeance no less drastic. A trick more cunning than crude barbarities like these was the systematic destruction of the people's means of living by the burning down or blowing up of the factories, like those at Balbriggan and Mallow, upon which half the working population depended for employment. Even the blameless rustic creameries to which many thousands of farmers trusted for a market for their milk were given wholesale to the flames ; and the only comment of the Prime Minister upon this pretty employment for the arms of England was his sneer at the influence of Sir Horace Plunkett as a peacemaker, that " he could no longer depend even upon the support of his creameries."

And the ineffectualness of all this gigantic apparatus of " frightfulness ! " The only people at all terrorized were the old folks, the sick, the mothers and their



babies trembling in their cabins, or driven to fly to the mountains or the graveyards for refuge from their midnight invaders. The young men who were the real quarry of the terrorists—even those who had hitherto kept aloof from the Revolution—were left no alternative but to swell the ranks of the Republican Army in their fastnesses in the hills, whence they swooped down in their own good time with a vengeance too often as savage as that of their antagonists and far more sure. The young women defied bullets and the courts-martial even more bravely than their brothers or sweethearts. After twelve months while this *lex talionis* was the only law of the land, the Irish Republican Army had so far got the better of the apparently irresistible forces opposed to them, that even in the cities no military lorry from which the muzzles of the rifles protruded could pass through the streets in open day without a bomb hurtling in the ears of its garrison, and in the country the railways were made impassable, the bridges blown up and the roads trenched and barricaded, and their most confidential despatches intercepted until their armoured cars no longer durst venture outside their garages and the Black-and-Tans found themselves cooped up in their guard-rooms, with no other resource left to relieve the tedium except the proceeds of their raids for whiskey and their quarrels—sometimes with revolvers as well as with fists—with the more clean-lived of the old Royal Irish Constabulary who were still condemned to keep their obscene company. They had turned against them the most timid man in the country, Unionist, as well as Nationalist, who was not within range of their rifles. As for the nation in general, who had smarted under the taunt that Irishmen fought bravely for every country except their own; who were humiliated to remember that for nearly a century they could only quote the three Manchester Martyrs and a very few others who had thought it worth while to offer up



their lives for Ireland—who remembered with a certain self-reproach, how lately it was that the country seemed to be sunk in shameless political corruption and self-seeking—they were open-eyed in wonder and delight to discover that a generation had arisen ready in thousands and in tens of thousands to die for Ireland with a mystic love-light in their eyes, and most wonderful of all that they were striking all the hosts of England with paralysis behind their fortresses and big guns. Every Irishman worth his salt the world over began to glow with pride in the young soldiers of his nation.

Sir Hamar Greenwood might go on undauntedly bragging and lying, but England was awakening to horrid glimpses of the truth. English men and women, who came over to see for themselves, were going back with stories that turned honest cheeks aflame ; and Mr. Lloyd George, excellent opportunist that he was, was beginning to ask himself whether in place of “ having Sinn Féin on the run ” and “ holding the murder-gang by the throat,” it was not perhaps the murder-gang who were having the best of it and whether it was not about time for him to “ go on the run himself.”



## CHAPTER XXIX

THE TRUCE OF 11TH JULY, 1921

ONE of the worst consequences of Mr. Lloyd George's mistaking reasonableness in the Sinn Féin leaders for weakness was to accentuate the demand for a Republic. Up to that time, the talk of a Republic arose largely from the habit of putting demands higher than expectations, which the shiftiness of English party politicians had encouraged. In his interview with me in August 1922, Mr. De Valera made a statement which throws a flood of light upon the secret processes by which the Irish Revolution was turned from peaceful action to arms. "He said" (I quote from my own note of our conversation) "he had spent the last four years trying to keep the peace between Cathal Brugha, on what he might call the old Fenian side, and Arthur Griffith, representing the Constitutional Sinn Féiners. They were really two separate movements, and nothing except the pressure of the Black-and-Tan terror kept them together so long." That I believe to be profoundly the historic truth of the matter. Parnell had the same nearly superhuman task as between the two wings of his own movement; but not only did Parnell possess a supreme genius for command, but the captains he attracted from the old Fenian host were men of as weighty a political judgment as his own, and the actual physical force movement had declined into a small and beaten sect, while the original Sinn Féin intellectual group had almost disappeared when the men of the Easter Week Rising by an absurd accident were forced to inherit their name, and the ferocity with which Dublin Castle persecuted every



form of open and advised action every month increased the secret predominance of the men of action.

Mr. Lloyd George's unlucky response perforce threw Mr. De Valera more and more into the hands of the more revolutionary of his counsellors. The Dáil was secretly assembled and the Republic solemnly proclaimed. A more serious matter still, the members were made to take an oath of allegiance to the Republic, and the difficulty of getting the young idealists who were the flower of the movement to break the oath by which they were thus consecrated to the service of the Republic as an organized reality became the most insurmountable of all the obstacles in the peace negotiations later on. When I commented to Mr. De Valera upon the unwisdom of thus prejudicing the ultimate issue by an engagement so notoriously sacred in Irish eyes, he answered (I again quote from my *précis* of our conversation), "that he was from the beginning opposed to any oath of any kind being taken. It was while he was in prison the first Dáil began by swearing allegiance to the Republic, and at the second Dáil they had to follow the precedent."

I did not myself take too tragic a view of Mr. Lloyd George's *non possumus*. It was impossible to know him without counting upon his readiness with a new set of opinions whenever the old set proved unworkable. I construed his letter as an order that the war must go on—until further orders. One of the brainiest of the Republican leaders, who afterwards became a Minister in the Cabinet of the First Dáil (Mr. Austin Stack) has more than once reminded me of my prognostication at the time: "If you can hold out for six months longer, you'll have a sporting offer from Lloyd George," and his own amused reply: "If you're a true prophet, that's all right; we can hold out for two years longer against man or devil."

Before the six months were over, the Prime Minister was wobbling, and the "sporting offer"



if it had not already come was on the way. In the meantime, Sir Hamar Greenwood's desperadoes grew more frantic than ever. Fresh regiments were poured across from England, it was made death to be in possession of firearms (two men were actually hanged for the offence) and the war of reprisals from both sides month by month assumed a more bloody and inhuman aspect, while a third party to the quarrel made its appearance in the shape of bands of highwaymen (mostly demobilised soldiers of the British Army) who roamed the country, plundering individuals and Banks with impartial pistols. It is curious to remark that, for the Bank robbery campaign, as for the substitution of assassination for persuasion in the case of the Constabulary, it was the Black Cabinet in Dublin Castle who set the example. They directed one of their Resident Magistrates, Mr. Alan Bell, to hold a Star Chamber inquisition at the Castle, at which he took forcible possession of the most confidential books of the Munster and Leinster Bank and laid hands on £20,000 of their funds on the suspicion that they belonged to Sinn Féin depositors. The unfortunate magistrate was promptly taken out of a tramcar on his way to the Castle, and shot dead on the roadside, and the Bank robbery initiated by the Government was copied with interest on the other side, until armed raids on the Banks became everywhere a common incident in the anarchy.

If women's purses (even that of General Strickland's wife) were snatched in the public streets by the Black-and-Tans, still less were the ministers of religion spared, and the higher their station the more ferocious was the relish with which they were persecuted and murdered. Dr. Fogarty, the Bishop of Killaloe, was the only one of the Irish Bishops, since the death of Dr. O'Dwyer, who openly took his stand with Sinn Féin in its time of agony, but he was none the less an innocuous politician who had been up to a



quite recent date a fervid admirer of the Parliamentary Party. The Bishop's palace at Ennis was raided in the middle of the night by an armed gang whose object, it can be charged upon unanswerable evidence, was to murder him. It came to my knowledge, upon the testimony of an actual eye-witness, that the Inspector of Constabulary, who commanded the Raiders, was shortly afterwards summoned to Dublin Castle to give a report of his expedition to his principal in chief command of the Auxiliaries. He related, with somewhat bumptious pride, the perfection of his arrangements, but "cursed his rotten luck that the old fox had given him the slip," and attributed to "some damned Catholic Peeler" the warning which had saved the Bishop's life. My information (which comes from a quarter not open to doubt) is that the Commandant, far from rebuking his subaltern's murderous zeal, followed him to the door when he was leaving, and took him by both hands with this shocking parting message: "Good bye, old chap. God bless you! Better luck next time!" And for months afterwards the hunted Bishop was "on the run" for his life in the mountains of Clare, like the most persecuted of his predecessors of the Penal Days.

Two other strokes of "frightfulness" which it was counted would mark the final subjugation of Sinn Féin, in reality put an end to the last possibility of breaking its spirit. One was the capture by a British warship on the high seas of Most Rev. Dr. Mannix, Archbishop of Melbourne, on his way to pay a last visit to his aged mother in his native country. The deportation to England of the Archbishop (admittedly the most powerful man in the Australian Commonwealth next to, if even next to, its Prime Minister, Mr. Hughes), and the paltry insolence of refusing him a last interview with his old Irish mother had the double effect of exhibiting the realities of the Irish



situation to all civilized mankind in a way there could be no suppressing or falsifying, and of stirring up the spirit of resistance in Ireland to a pitch incomparably more passionate than could have been roused by the few public speeches it was the poor strategy of the British kidnappers to strangle.

A still more stupid offence against humanity was the slow torture to death of the young Lord Mayor of Cork, Terence Mac Swiney. He was seized during the ceremony of his inauguration in succession to his predecessor, Tomás Mac Curtain, who was called out of his bed at midnight by a band of Auxiliaries and murdered in the presence of his wife and children, and who, Sir Hamar Greenwood with a face of brass assured the House of Commons had been assassinated by his brother Sinn Féiners. Young Mac Swiney, once in the toils of these monsters of lying and foul-play, made the last protest that was open to him against the iniquity of his imprisonment by devoting himself to the slow torments of death by hunger. Day by day, week after week, the world kept watch outside Brixton Jail while the Irish idealist lay calmly looking into the eyes of death every hour of the day and of the night with a steadfastness outlasting that of Mutius Scævola, whom History has made immortal for plunging only an arm into the flames. His jailors were as inexorable as Death, but, as the clumsiest experimentalist in human nature might have anticipated, it was the dead idealist who left Brixton Jail the victor, and not they. Sir Hamar Greenwood himself began to understand when an Archbishop and six Bishops with their mitres and croziers and in their purple robes, tramped through the streets of Cork before the coffin of Terence Mac Swiney.

By this time the sea-change was beginning to work in the Prime Minister. As the Commission of Inquiry from the Labour Party and the foremost publicists of the American and French Press swarmed



over to see for themselves and published their experiences to a horrified world, Sir Hamar Greenwood's early manner as a professor of able-bodied mendacity could no longer yield much comfort to his Chief. The first indignant denial that there had ever been reprisals had to be given up for shambling admissions that reprisals—and no doubt reprehensible reprisals—there had been ; the stories that the Mayors of Cork and Limerick had been murdered and a hundred towns and villages given to the flames by the Sinn Féiners themselves could no longer be got to pass the lying lips of the mythomaniacs, although they have never to this hour been honestly apologized for. But at least the reprisals, it was promised, were henceforth to be " official reprisals " carried out under responsible military authority. The more barbaric vengeance of the Black-and-Tans were without doubt discouraged, instead of being instigated, by humane and gallant soldiers like Sir Nevill Macready. It was not possible for such men to come to close quarters with those miscreants without being obliged to report that they had placed themselves outside the pale of civilization and that their deeds, far from diminishing the power of Sinn Féin, had maddened the country into a system of resistance so irresistible, so omnipresent and so ably conducted that no army could put it down without a general massacre of unarmed old men, women and children, which would make the name of England an astonishment and a hissing among civilized men.

By the spring of 1920 the Prime Minister who in July 1919 had mistaken for the white flag of a beaten man Mr. De Valera's offer of peace while he had still an undisputed power to enforce it, was casting about for negotiations upon more ignominious terms with Archbishop Clune, an Australian Prelate who, with the usual clumsiness of England's dealings with Ireland, was eagerly welcomed to Dublin Castle by way of administering another snub to his more authori-



tative colleague of Melbourne, all this time held in loose custody in London, far from his native land and from consultation with the Sinn Féin chiefs with whom his word was law. Was the voice of Wisdom, which sitteth by the throne, to be heard even then? The concessions announced to Archbishop Clune were, it is certain, the same in substance as those embodied in the Treaty signed in Downing Street in December, 1921, after eighteen further months of official brutalities which were wholly unavailing except that they most dangerously increased the power of the military chiefs of the I.R.A. as the arbiters between peace and war. It was to be "Canadian Home Rule" under precisely the same conditions of a Canada robbed of its richest province and coerced into an Imperial tribute, which was the best Mr. Griffith and General Collins could obtain for Ireland in the Treaty of Downing Street. The one difference of any moment between the two offers was that Mr. Lloyd George still held out for the surrender of their arms by the I.R.A. as an indispensable preliminary. For the sake of saving Sir Hamar Greenwood's face by this paltry satisfaction, the chance of an agreement then and there which the *pur sang* Republicans were not yet strong enough to forbid was once more madly sacrificed. Sir Hamar Greenwood's face was not saved, because the condition then insisted upon was after another year of wanton bloodshed ignominiously dropped. The only result British statesmanship had to show for itself was that it arrayed the entire Irish race at the back of the Irish Republican Army in their refusal to surrender the arms by which they had brought Mr. Lloyd George to reason, and by which alone they could make sure he would not undergo a further sea-change before the bargain was honestly through, if he found himself negotiating with a disarmed nation. Another of the few remaining books of the Cumæan Sibyl was cast to the winds.



On went the war with immeasurable loss of blood and credit on both sides, and with ever multiplying obstacles to that enduring peace which Ireland had gone on petitioning for until her soul was sick. It was the unsundered arms that in the long run did it. It would, of course, be nonsense to say the English armies were driven out of the country by the phantom levies of the I.R.A. The *guerilla* bands were nowhere able to meet in battle-array the exultant legions just returned from their dazzling victories on the Continent, but it is no less true that the I.R.A. achieved the still more amazing military feat of cutting up that tremendous English army of a hundred thousand men into helpless fragments, isolating them, torturing them and getting upon their nerves in small surprises by night and day until it grew to be the one desperate longing of that host of heroes to get their orders for England.

Heaven defend me from doing any wilful injustice to Mr. Lloyd George, if only because he is a cousin Celt in qualities and defects alike, and there is a call of the blood which thrilled the whole Celtic breed with pride at the sight of the dauntless little Welsh country practitioner bestriding the narrow world like a Colossus, as for memorable years he did. It will not do to dismiss him as "a turncoat from Home Rule," as did one of the Hibernian leaders who had been for years swinging an abject censer before his altar. If Mr. Lloyd George swopped Home Rule for Partition, so did Mr. Asquith and the rest of his "Home Rule Cabinet"; so did the Hibernian Party themselves, without a single exception. They were "turncoats" all, or none. My own conviction has been already avowed that had he occupied Mr. Asquith's place, with Mr. Asquith's majority, and did Parnell's spirit still animate the Irish Party, Mr. Lloyd George would have developed the clear sightedness and imagination to carry a great Home Rule Act without any serious dissent from Ulster. He



would have understood the Irish aversion to Partition as he would have died on the slopes of shadowy Snowdon rather than submit, had the since Disestablished Church of Wales (a minority proportionately more considerable than that of Unionist Ulster in Ireland) proposed by way of compromise to cut up his own high-spirited little country into two provinces of Church-goers and Chapel-goers at eternal enmity. But now that "the Act on the Statute-book" with Ireland's own privity, was changed from a Home Rule Act to a Partition Act, Mr. Lloyd George, for whom there was no absolute truth in politics, but only a relative truth adjustable according to the reports of his Party whips, felt it a duty to try whether, as he was noisily assured from Dublin Castle, a Black-and-Tan settlement on that basis might not be the line of least resistance. The Black-and-Tans, the Whips now began to report, were not a success either in dragooning Ireland or in comforting the conscience of England, and the Prime Minister who had a faible for pushing his admiration for brave enemies to the length of despising friends down on their luck, frankly threw over his disreputable auxiliaries in Ireland and began to see an unexampled opportunity opening up before him of seeking an Irish victory in a precisely opposite direction, which was very likely more welcome to his heart of hearts.

If he could not (in the pretty Black-and-Tan jargon of the day) "do in" Sinn Féin, he must e'en parley with it, and for that he had advantages unknown to any of his predecessors. To begin with, a King (it would be churlish to forget) whose yearning for an Irish appeasement was a factor of the first importance in mollifying the most ingrained English prejudices. Next, both Mr. Bonar Law and Sir E. Carson, who had made him Prime Minister, and made him their prisoner, were now removed from the active scene. That co-operation of English Parties, for



which Gladstone sighed to no purpose was ready to his hand. Not altogether—may it sans immodesty be hinted?—without a share of influence from labours of our own for many an unregarded year, the hesitations of the Unionist Party in particular—of fine Elder Statesmen of the stamp of Mr. Walter Long, as well as of the rising hopes and brains-carriers of the Party like Mr. Austen Chamberlain and Mr. F. E. Smith (now Lord Birkenhead) and Lord Robert Cecil himself—had given way to bolder notions of Irish liberty. None but a pathetic handful of ancient Tory impossibilists any longer stood in the way.

On the Liberal side, Mr. Asquith, again at the head of his “Wee Free” following in the House of Commons, was arraigning the atrocity-mongers in Ireland with the noble eloquence which was always his, and was advocating, as with a father’s pride, a most opulent measure of that Dominion Home Rule which he had quite overlooked in the days of his Premiership. The Labour Party were to a man for Ireland’s deliverance, the more complete the better. The Irish Unionists outside the Six Counties, who might have been a political force of the first magnitude, had they asserted themselves before they were deserted by Sir E. Carson and contemptuously ignored by the Parliament of England, did at last find voice to claim kinship with the aspirations of their countrymen. The Anti-Partition organisations of Irish Conservatives of capacity and high integrity like Lord Midleton and Sir Horace Plunkett, late comers though they were into the vineyard, did bring a substantial accession of strength to Mr. Lloyd George in the daring change of front he was meditating.

That he did not enlist the aid of Sir James Craig as well was the capital mistake of the Prime Minister in his new peace negotiations. The Ulster leader was never an incorrigible enemy of a *modus vivendi* with his Southern countrymen. Like so many of the



higher Orange type, if he was an irresponsible being for half a dozen mad " anniversary " days, he was for all the rest of the year a kindly neighbour, a fast friend, more honest of heart than complex in the convolutions of his brain matter, but in all things, flattering or otherwise, as irredeemably Irish as the granite ribs of Cave Hill. At this moment, Sir E. Carson had gone off to the House of Lords, throwing the squalling baby Parliament in Belfast on his hands under circumstances which could scarcely fail to try the temper of the deserted Covenanters. Sir James Craig had besides been mellowing down into a popular officer of the King's Household, and would, we may be sure, have found more congenial work in gratifying the King's dearest desire than he had ever found in qualifying to be one of His Majesty's Rebels. It would not have been difficult, with his good will, to enlarge the " National Council " of the Act of 1920 into some real bond of National Unity, such as would have made it the pride of Ulster to be represented in the National Parliament, while retaining in any desired measure the local liberties she enjoys in her Belfast assembly. That no objection would have come from the Sinn Féin side is made clear by President Cosgrave, who declares that had Ulster accepted the Treaty of Downing Street as it stood she would still be in possession of her particularist privileges in as ample a measure as the All-for-Ireland League had ever proposed.<sup>1</sup> Sir James Craig had already given proof

<sup>1</sup> " It is not generally understood," President Cosgrave said in the Dáil, " by the man in the street that had the Northerns elected to remain with us they would be guaranteed in perpetuity every acre of territory that for the moment is under their control. They would have retained their Parliament of the Six Counties and their separate judiciary and their Governor, according to their pleasure . . . and would have had under the Constitution of the Free State, a representation of 51 members in the Free State Parliament, instead of 13 members who now represent them at Westminster."



by his perfectly courteous conversations with Mr. De Valera and Mr. Griffith that he was not averse to those more cordial understandings that nearly always follow personal contact.

To leave such a man out in the cold while "the murder gang" were being welcomed to Downing Street was to invite suspicion among Sir J. Craig's touchy lieges and indeed to give it full justification. Yet this was what actually happened. The Ministerial plan of campaign, I am afraid it will be found, was first to favour Sinn Féin by cheating "Ulster," and next when that portion of the programme broke down to cheat Sinn Féin by calling in "Ulster." While the Treaty of Downing Street was under discussion at the Dáil there was held a secret sitting at which full shorthand notes of the conversations between the British Ministers and the Sinn Féin delegates were communicated to the members under the strictest precautions as to secrecy. Members were not only specially pledged to regard the information as confidential, on pain of an instant renewal of hostilities by England, but measures were taken to prevent any written notes on the subject from being conveyed out of the chamber. Until the full official record, which must be still somewhere preserved, sees the light, the truth as to the most important Irish transaction for a century must still remain obscure and any enlightened judgment regarding the responsibilities for the Treaty and for the Civil War that followed must be postponed until the secret part of the story comes to be divulged. My own information on the subject—derived though it is from three separate participants in the Secret Session—can only be made public under every reserve.

There are some details, however, which are not to be doubted. The first is that the Ministerialists contrived to shift the discussions at the Conference from the straight issue of the Integrity of Ireland



by leading the representatives of Sinn Féin to believe that the same end was to be more astutely attained by means of a Boundary Commission. That, I think, will be found to have been the cardinal error of the capable but inexperienced Irishmen who found themselves pitted against the most subtle intellects the Empire could select. They allowed the debates to be diverted from the supreme rights of Ireland as one indivisible Nation, on which nothing could defeat them, to paltrier controversies as to whether this or that county, barony or parish might not be swopped from the Protestant to the Catholic side of the frontier and so ensuring that what remained of "Northern Ireland" must in the nature of things follow. The notion came (my information goes) from the ingenious brain of Mr. Winston Churchill whose position as Colonial Secretary gave him a more commanding influence than ever in his ill-fated incursions into the affairs of Ireland. He, with the express authority of Mr. Lloyd George, conveyed to the Irish delegates an assurance that the Boundary Commission would be so arranged as to ensure the transfer to the Irish Free State of the counties of Tyrone and Fermanagh, the City of Derry and the important town of Newry, and that "Northern Ireland" thus virtually restricted to three counties, would find itself compelled to throw in its fortunes with the Free State. In one of his impulsive moments General Collins blurted out in a public speech the announcement upon Mr. Churchill's authority that, under the Boundary Commission stipulated for in the Treaty "vast territories" would be transferred from the Six Counties to the Free State. This was the first news of the arrangement which reached Sir James Craig. He promptly and indignantly announced that with a Boundary Commission of such a character he would have nothing to do. Mr. Churchill, when brought to book by a question in the House of Commons, denied that he



had ever promised "to Mr. Michael Collins" the transfer of "vast territories" by means of the Boundary Commission. The reply was technically true, but was essentially false. It was not "to Mr. Michael Collins" he had given the promise; it was to Mr. Michael Collins' intermediary. How responsible Ministers could ever have hoped that such a transaction could be secretly carried through, behind the back of Sir James Craig, in violation of the solemn pledge given to him by the Imperial Parliament of the integrity of his territory under the Act of the previous year, passes comprehension; but, unless three different testimonies which have reached me from trustworthy sources are to be discredited, the promise was undoubtedly given, and was only violated when General Collins' incautious disclosure roused Ulster up in arms against the chicanery.

Two of the five Irish signatories of the Treaty declared they only signed it under duress. The duress was, it is true, gross and unwarrantable. They were threatened that unless they signed before a particular hour of the night of 5-6 December, without being allowed time to communicate with their principals in Dublin, the dogs of war would be instantly let loose in Ireland and the order passed to the Black-and-Tans to set on. The threat was reinforced by the melodramatic announcement that a Destroyer had steam up to carry the news of the signing or of the break-off on the same night to Sir James Craig in Belfast—the Sir James Craig who had been kept for a month in total darkness as to how the negotiations were going. It is impossible to believe that men of the superb courage of General Collins' and Arthur Griffith were daunted by stage craft of this kind. They must have known that, even had these particular negotiations for a Treaty broken down, the Truce would still be in existence, and could only be denounced after full time for deliberation in England and after every resource of



diplomacy for negotiations in some new form had been exhausted. Terrific as was the risk of replunging Ireland into a sea of blood and terror, the very nature of the intimidation employed against them would have placed the sympathies of all civilized men on the side of Ireland if they declined to be hustled by such methods into consenting to part with one-fourth of the population and one-fifth of the territory of their nation.

It is more creditable to the moral courage of the Irish delegates, and I believe, truer to the facts, to conclude that their signatures were obtained, not so much under pressure of the threats of the Government, shameful though they were, as in reliance upon the promise of Mr. Winston Churchill and the Prime Minister that the Boundary Commission would result in the inevitable merger of the Six Counties in the Free State of Ireland. As it turned out, that promise had to be broken and the Boundary Commission reduced to a parochial business, if it is to be heard of any more; and the first violation of the Treaty, in its spirit if not in its letter, had to be charged against England. The root cause of thinking Irishmen's repugnance to the Treaty of Downing Street went deeper than the pedantic difference between genuine Canadian Home Rule and a Republic. Had the Sinn Féin leaders—those who unwisely remained in Dublin, as well as those who shouldered the responsibility in London—taken their stand from the start upon the impregnable rock of the integrity of their country, and all their efforts been bent to overcoming the apprehensions of Ulster, nothing could have resisted the tide of thanksgiving which would have borne the Treaty to victory in a country blent together with the high mission and inspiration of National Regeneration. Even if these particular negotiations had to be broken off upon the clear issue of "Ireland a Nation, and not two hostile States," we should have



had a justification in the eyes of civilized mankind against which Black-and-Tan methods could never again have raised their blood-guilty hands.

For, whatever else may be doubtful, Black-and-Tannery was flatly and for ever beaten to the earth as an instrument of human government. And that, as I have already insisted, not by the valour of the young soldiers of Ireland alone, but by noble and enlightened co-operation from British lovers of freedom. A race of natural kindness akin to weakness might, indeed, have been almost too effusive in forgetting all but the cheerfulness with which Mr. Lloyd George and his Ministers themselves gave up their prejudices and boasts of only a few months before, were it not that their change of heart was made manifest only after it became clear that the savagery of the Black-and-Tans was a failure as well as a crime—if not a crime because it was a failure. The game was up, at all events, in Ireland. The surrender of arms, on which the conversations with Archbishop Clune were broken off, had to be meekly given up. The Truce was proclaimed for the 11th July, 1921, as between two armies on an equal footing.

The last engagement of the war was a characteristic one. The Truce was to come into force at noon on July 11th. At twenty minutes before noon a detachment of Black-and-Tans passing in caged lorries through the village of Castleisland, County Kerry, was attacked by a company of the I.R.A. and a fierce, and, I am sorry to say, deadly conflict ensued, in the brief war-minutes still remaining. When at twelve o'clock the first stroke of the Angelus Bell sounded from the village church-tower, the I.R.A. took off their caps and put up their guns. Not another shot was fired after the appointed hour in Castleisland or anywhere else through the country. That afternoon "the boys" scampered down from the hills into the towns "on a fortnight's furlough," as they modestly



calculated, and celebrated their holiday in the half-schoolboy, half-fanatic spirit in which they had for two years maintained their war against an Empire still inebriated with the greatest military triumph in its history. They had their devout Requiem Masses for the fallen, their vast processions for the removal of the bodies of their dead comrades from the resting places in the bogs and mountains where they had found their temporary graves; they ordered the closing of the public houses with as stern a discipline as ever; but in the sweet summer evenings sang their "Soldier's Song" and danced their jigs around the bonfires with their sweethearts with the same frolic welcome with which they had for many a month of danger hailed the thunder or the sunshine—the ghastly wounds or the shouts of victory.



## CHAPTER XXX

## AND AFTER ?

HERE a book specially designed to trace "How the Irish Revolution Came About" might well come to its rightful end. From untold depths of degradation the young men of the Sinn Féin cycle had raised the Irish cause to a pinnacle at which the most powerful empire on the earth, its Coercion Ministers, its iron captains, and both Houses of its Imperial Parliament solicited almost on bended knees Ireland's acceptance of a Treaty, which to a more down-trodden generation might have seemed fabulously favorable. The first phase of the Revolution finished in all but unspotted glory with the Truce of July 11th, 1921. The Truce which was the work of the soldiers marked the truly memorable date rather than the Treaty of December 5-6, 1921, which was the work of the politicians. For, to the humiliation of English statesmanship and of Irish "Constitutional" methods as well, be it recorded, the Treaty could never have come up for discussion at all were it not for the heroic fortitude and the sheer military genius with which the Truce was first achieved by a host of unknown striplings, flinging themselves unterrified against the seeming omnipotence of English militarism in its most barbaric mood and in its most intoxicated hour of triumph. It was the last of the soldiers' part of a gallant and united war.

Would there not however be a certain heartlessness in concluding without some endeavour with the best skill at one's command to lift a corner of the black curtain behind which the dread drama of the future is



in preparation? In all the revolutions of men success brings its sacrifices of broken friendships, which passed through the fire and were not burnt, of illusions that seemed certitudes, of dreams that were divine. The faith, that wrought miracles in the obscurity of the Catacombs, showed a less holy flame when the miracle-workers marched out to fame and power in the Golden House of the Cæsars. *Que la République était belle—sous l'Empire!* has its meaning for others than the cynics of the Third Republic. The mere ugliness which is everywhere apt to overspread the first radiant face of armed Revolution was not to be avoided in Ireland. Of poisoned words and vindictive passions—of deeds on both sides to make honest Irish blood run cold—there was enough and to spare, but of greed or self-seeking as little as may consort with the motives of mortals. Taunts of “place hunting” against unfortunate Ministers every day or night, of whose lives might be their last, in their efforts to preserve what they regarded as the only semblance of settled government left to the country, were not more absurdly unjust than the counter-charge that the many thousands of outlaws hunted and maligned who were couching in the winter hills wasted with hunger and exposure were simply pursuing a lucrative means of livelihood as they trod an unregarded Calvary for their Idea.

The rudimentary facts of the case are not so simple as they are too often taken to be. The divine right of the Provisional Government rested on the following proposition: “The outstanding fact is that the Free State Government is the Government selected by the will of the people of Ireland and consequently it is the lawful government.” That is the very claim on which the case for unquestioning submission to the Free State Government topples over. There is no such “outstanding fact.” There was no such pronouncement of the clear will of the people of Ireland—



not even of "Southern Ireland," which alone was permitted any voice.

A Treaty which was only sanctioned by a majority of one, of its five Irish signatories, and by a majority of seven in the Dáil even under the dishonest threat of the return of the Black-and-Tans, can hardly be said to carry in itself the sacredness of an irrevocable decree by a nation. The Provisional Government which was the outcome of that narrow vote based all its authority upon the claim that it represented the vote of an overpowering majority of the Irish people—it was put as high as 95 and even 99 per cent.—at the General Election of June, 1922. That claim is however a notoriously untenable one. True majority rule was represented at the General Election by the Collins-De Valera Pact solemnly recommended to the country by the unanimous resolutions of the Dáil and of the Ard-Fhéis—that is to say of the men who alone had made any Treaty possible. The painful violation of that Pact at the last moment all but completely mystified and nullified the vote of "Southern Ireland" at the General Election, sending back a decreased number of Free Staters as well as a more largely decreased number of Republicans and substituting for the defeated candidates of both sides a new body of Labourites and nondescript Independents, whose appearance was the only genuine resultant of the General Election. The General Election was in reality a stalemate. Those who stirred up the repudiation on the eve of the polls of the *modus vivendi* unanimously endorsed by the Dáil and by the Ard-Fhéis were the men who set the Civil War, with all its horrors, going.

It was idle to claim any divine right for a Government proceeding from a confusion such as this—a Government which although forming the largest group was in matter of fact a minority Government, since even in an expurgated Dáil from which the 34



elected Republicans were excluded the Government thus apotheosised could only command a majority of 4 on a Vote of Censure upon an issue so vital as their policy of reprisals and must have been promptly turned out of office had the Republicans been admitted to the Division Lobby. When a Government with this precarious title began—even before summoning the newly elected representatives of the people at all to ask their sanction—by bombarding the Four Courts and starting the Civil War the night after receiving something like an insolent order from Mr. Churchill it is not difficult to understand, why the claim of such a Government to a sanction from on high in the name of “Majority Rule!” was scouted by the young soldiers of Ireland who were old enough to remember that the same cry of “Majority Rule!” raised largely by the same people was responsible for all the disasters of Ireland in the previous fifteen years—the killing of Land Purchase, the Partition of the country and the universal shipwreck from which nothing but the Revolution now anathematised could have saved the Irish cause.

The ease with which Mr. Winston Churchill's heavy artillery enabled the Free State Generals to dispose of military operations on the grand scale, led the Irish and the English papers to form a ridiculously erroneous estimate of the insignificance of the resistance before them. Months after the capture of the “last rebel stronghold” and of another last and still another last had been proclaimed until men's hearts were sick of the boast, the Generals of the Free State found themselves in the same position in which General Macready had been twelve months before: every town and village was theirs and their foe was more unseizable than ever. They were cutting unresisting waters with an irresistible sword, but the waters were not dispersed. When President Cosgrave assured the English public through the *Times* that he was only



dealing with "a handful of boys and of neurotic women," he was making a boast which only the isolation from public opinion in which he and his government were compelled to live could excuse. The "handful" multiplied to above ten thousand men in the Free State jails and still enough of the "handful" remained outside to make the task of an army of fifty thousand trained men a heartbreaking and futile one. If the Free State Ministry could succeed in drowning resistance in a river of young Irish blood, their troubles would be only thickening.

It is no less true that the proceedings of the Republicans or of those who disguise themselves in their garb have often reached a pitch of folly that might well be mistaken for dementia. Their criminal recklessness of the life and limbs of non-combatants, their forced levies, their bomb-throwings and burnings and railway raids in every form of blind destructiveness that could imperil the people's means of communication, their sources of employment and even their daily food—shook the foundations of morals and civilisation to their base and might well seem to justify the sacred fury with which any suggestion of a truce with such men on any terms short of unconditional subjection or extermination was denounced as treason to the first principles of society. Recriminations are natural enough in the first heat of hasty and uninformed judgments on both sides. But recriminations are a poor game when it has become a question of splitting Ireland from top to bottom by new chasms of hatred among her sons, which generations may labour in vain to reclose. A cause capable of inspiring a hundred thousand young Irishmen to the most amazing and tenacious sacrifices, month after month, in the face of overpowering odds, cannot be a wholly guilty one, and assuredly is not to be disposed of by words of wrath any more than by the volleys of the firing platoons to which the official reprisals were entrusted.



The Civil War began as soon as the General Election, which was neutralised by the violation of the Collins-De Valera Pact was over, and is dragging along ever since. It is to be lamented that every effort of honest public opinion to stop the war before the mischief should be irreparable, was overbearingly and even flippantly stamped out. "These peace resolutions are all moonshine!" were the first words of the Democratic President of the Free State in a manifesto waving aside a long series of conciliatory resolutions beginning with the unanimous appeal of the Senate, which he had himself just nominated as the Second House of his own Parliament, and followed by the resolutions of all the National Corporations and most of the County Councils in "Southern Ireland"; and there were other jibes and threats still more unworthy of his high station. "The Bulletin" which is supposed to be the official organ of Mr. De Valera responded with the no less irrational ultimatum "Ireland shall not enter into the British Empire so long as there is a man of us left alive."

To stand up against stiff-necked unreason on both sides such as this, the only friends of peace who have hitherto presented themselves with a dog's chance of being listened to are "The Old I.R.A. Association" of men who fought in the Anglo-Irish War, up to the Truce of July 11th, 1921, and since the Civil War broke out have refused to imbrue their hands in brothers' blood on either side. As I write, their claims, too, to interfere are being insidiously counterworked and that largely by those who were never militants in the united Sinn Féin movement and would not be too disconsolate to see it going to pieces through intensified dissensions. Whether "The Old I.R.A. Association" may not fail of a hearing as sadly as all that went before them have failed who shall dare to think unlikely? They have at least the advantage that in no other direction can any prospect of an enduring National Pacification



be now discerned. They are believed to represent the cream of the fighters who were ready for any feat for Freedom's sake except fratricide ; and they if any have the commission to carry their appeal at need from the half a dozen men on each side who forbid negotiations to the overwhelming majority of a people, who abhor a war of partisans and can see nothing but bankruptcy and red ruin before the country unless it can be stopped.

What are the definite proposals which press for a solemn reconsideration by all thinking Irishmen ?

The first is that an Irishman is not necessarily an *hostis humani generis* who looks for the revision of a Treaty which substitutes for Ireland a Nation a State shorn of Ireland's richest province, laden with a liability of unknown extent for England's National Debt of seven thousands of millions, and forbidden any thought of National Independence with bullies' threats which no other Dominion would brook.

The next is that to make a Truce possible at all it must be an Unconditional Truce. Standing upon the punctilio that the Republicans must first surrender their arms is to condemn the country to the last extremities of an unforgivable blood feud in order to gratify militarist vanity in an infinitely paltry matter. There is no answer to the argument that if Mr. Lloyd George had been equally strait-laced in his first demand for the surrender of arms there could have been no Truce and consequently no Treaty to put the Free State Ministers in power.

If to such an accomodation the existing Ministry interpose an irrevocable Veto there seems to be no alternative but the obvious one of a change of Ministry, accompanied, as it must be, with the corresponding resignations of such of the Republican leaders as may be found to be on opposite grounds equally irreconcilable. The two sets of changes would not involve more than a dozen individuals all told, and of these none but



General Mulcahy on the one side, and Mr. De Valera on the other were personally known even by name to the mass of the Irish people up to a few months ago. A hard saying it may be and disagreeable for many. "All things are hard" quoth Heavenly Wisdom itself. There is an undoubted element of cruelty in the proposition, but it demands no greater measure of self-sacrifice and for the highest patriotic motives than their past and even present sufferings of mind and body must exact. In the last resort public opinion "must be cruel only to be kind" if the nation is not to slip down from danger to destruction. The decree *sic vos non vobis* would simply come to their turn as it did to all others who went before them.

And it is not as if a change of Ministry might imply a rupture with England, as might have happened before the Treaty was the established law of both countries. It can only be altered by slow and deliberate negotiations, English and Irish. The choice of Ministers is a purely domestic concern with which a man of Mr. Bonar Law's shrewd sense would not think of meddling. Indeed the fact that it is Mr. Bonar Law and not Mr. Lloyd George or Mr. Winston Churchill who is now to be dealt with is a sufficient reminder that every one of the five British signatories to the Treaty has since been dismissed from office without causing the smallest jar in the relations between the two countries.

Both parties to the Civil War have suffered so atrociously without any compensating results that, the blessings of peace and good fellowship once restored, it is not conceivable that men with a spark of patriotism or human reason should replunge the country into the abyss of fratricide. Undoubtedly other problems will arise with the Truce. The fact has to be faced that there cannot be any tolerable peace until it is made possible for the Republicans freely to re-enter the public life of the country, and



this will only be practicable if the oath of allegiance which at present shuts them out from the Parliament of the Twenty-Six Counties is abolished.

You and I may here again insist upon the pettiness of the point in dispute and argue that sworn allegiance to a régime "as by law established" does not forfeit men's freedom to work for a very different one "as by law disestablished," and did not prevent the sworn lieges of Charles I. and James II. from taking away their crowns—in one case "with a head in it." What matters is that the Republicans do not regard it as a petty point, but, from quite respectable scruples of conscience, would no more take the oath than they would surrender their fire arms. But again the difficulty is not so insurmountable as it may look. Mr. Bonar Law is too frank and fearless a statesman not to perceive that the only link left between the two countries and the strongest of all links is the laws of Nature, which continue to bind the two nations together in the most vital of their material interests, with stronger than hoops of steel, and if there was no other difficulty about getting the Republicans to labour for their ideals in the Dáil with all the comely arts of persuasion, he would not I think waste much energy in holding on by a form of oath already watered down to a consistency almost contemptuous of the royal personages whom it was framed to honour.

An emergency will arise at once in which the Free Staters, Republicans and Socialists among whom the Irish Parliament of the future must be divided would find an ample field for united action. The Boundary Commission is foredoomed to failure. It cannot give effect to Mr. Winston Churchill's undertaking to transfer "vast territories" from "Northern Ireland" to "Southern Ireland," in virtue of which the Treaty was really signed. The failure will constitute an essential breach of the Treaty on the part of England, and all Irish parties will be equally keen in



resenting and resisting it. In claiming satisfaction and a revision of the Treaty by friendly negotiation with England, and if needs be by an appeal to the League of Nations where it will henceforth meet England on an equal footing, the Free State will run no risk of a break with England, much less of a war for the reconquest of the country, such as demoralised the timorous and the war-sick in their first judgment of the Treaty of Downing Street.

There can be no finality in the paltry expedients of politicians for human government. The original constitution of Canada—even the broader one suggested by Lord Durham—had to be altered from the first clause to the last before it reached its present glorious evolution. The first step was that the province of Quebec once separated as “Northern Ireland” is now separated had to be restored. The far scattered legislatures of Australia were federated into the Commonwealth without friction not to speak of war despatches from the Colonial Office. The breakdown of the English machinery for working the Treaty as between North and South would justify and indeed necessitate its amendment, and not in reference to the breach of the Churchill agreement alone, but in the direction of making Ireland’s freedom from compulsory Imperial contributions as complete as Canada’s own.

England cannot long stand over a state of things in Ulster in which the Catholic and Sinn Féin minority are left without a single representative in the Belfast Parliament and have been shamefully gerrymandered out of the Corporations, County Councils and District Councils even in counties where they have been proved to be a majority of the taxpayers and rate payers; in which Cardinal Logue cannot cross the frontier for a visitation of his archdiocese without being held up and offensively searched, and is forbidden liberty to say his midnight Mass at Christmas



in the Cathedral of St. Patrick ; and in which Republican soldiers are secretly flogged with the cat o' nine tails in the prisons of the Partitionists. The sternness with which the Provisional Government have endeavoured to enforce the Treaty to its last letter at the cost of the most drastic severities against their late comrades of the I.R.A. gives them an unanswerable claim for the assistance of England in revising the more insufferable parts of the Treaty.

There would be no need of invoking the intervention of the League of Nations in any spirit of hostility, nor, if the two Nations are wise, of invoking it at all. If the demand of Ireland took the form of a Referendum of all Ireland on the simple issue : Partition or No Partition ? it is not easy to imagine how a British Prime Minister of wisdom is going to resist it. Alsace-Lorraine is no more populous and is very much less wealthy than Ulster. It forms less than one-eighth of the area of France, while Ulster covers more than a fourth of the area of Ireland and has for unnumbered centuries contributed the richest pages of her history. England which did not grudge two millions of British lives to restore Alsace-Lorraine to France, has at the same moment quadrused Ireland in affecting to restore her freedom. This cannot be. No British statesman in his senses can be under the delusion that an Ireland admitted to the Comity of Nations can ever submit to be ravished of her Alsace-Lorraine without an outbreak of Irish Irredentism which will command the universal sympathy of mankind. No Prime Minister could fail to understand that British opinion alone would promptly square accounts with him, if he set out upon a barbarous reconquest of Ireland by conscripting an army of not less than 200,000 men and at a cost of not less than £300,000,000 to be added to the financial burdens under which the most patient taxpayers of Britain are already bowed to the earth.



Provided always that Irish statesmen are large minded as well as unshakeable. Provided always that they give up once for all the urchins' joy of twisting the British Lion's tail, and that in their dealings with their Northern fellow countrymen they weary not of proving to them that the National Fraternity to which they invite them is the heart's desire of a generous and noble Nation, and that they abate not a jot of the special rights and guarantees everybody is now willing enough to concede if they are to be the means of assuaging the forebodings of Ulster. Upon these conditions a Referendum—"Partition or No Partition?"—to be voted upon by the entire population of Ireland—(which it must be remembered has never yet been tried)—would to all human certainty yield such a majority for National Unity—even within the Ulster borders—as must conclude all further controversy on the matter for civilised men. An Ireland thus re-united in the plenitude of her all-embracing liberties would not be long in healing her wounds and might fare forward to the future without an enemy in the world to dim the lustre of her aspirations as "a Nation once Again."

MALLOW,

*January 10th, 1923.*







## APPENDIX

### MY WITHDRAWAL FROM PARLIAMENT IN 1903

THE following letters, throwing some light upon the circumstances under which I withdrew from Parliament in 1903, it was not found possible to insert at length in the body of the narrative :—

#### I. O'BRIEN *to* BISHOP OF RAPHOE.

MALLOW COTTAGE, WESTPORT,

*January 1, 1903.*

MY DEAR LORD,—Your letter has just reached me here. With the spirit that prompted it, I am heartily in accord. I had a long chat with John Dillon, who states no objection to the tenants' terms, but objects to any Conference and apparently to any responsibility in connection with the settlement of the Land question. He will not, of course, however, do or say anything to resist the judgment of the country—his attitude so far as I could understand being an entirely passive one. As for our friend, Mr. Davitt, we had three hours and a half together on Tuesday, but in his present mood there would not be the smallest use in reasoning with him. The best plan is to avoid any unnecessary reference to him and let time do its work. Unfortunately it would not be possible, without wrecking the whole scheme, to allow these incoherent and mischievous newspaper controversies go on without reply. Your Lordship must recollect that the whole scheme depends upon a Treasury Contribution of about twenty millions. That money would be forthcoming if the Government were certain it would purchase peace, but of course it would be madness for any Government to ask England for such a sum if they were told by the *Freeman* and its correspondents that we are unable to guarantee peace and that, in fact, the Bill would create more discontent than ever. The only way of putting an end to that danger is to prove that the country is with us, and that the country is doing for itself magnificently, in spite of all weak or irresponsible suggestions.

I, of course, heartily agree with your Lordship that the real question for the country is not whether it would accept our terms, but whether it will get them or anything like them. We most certainly wont unless the Government is convinced that the people have no share in Mr. Davitt's agitation. The present discussion is all sheer loss, and the curious thing is that the people who are



now so eager to wreck a mighty settlement will be by and by the last to help us to fight a bad Bill if a bad Bill should be the result of their efforts.

However, I have still every hope that the splendid fidelity of the country will persuade Wyndham that he has a real chance of peace, and of course your Lordship may rest assured that Mr. Redmond and myself are keenly alive to the necessity for working cordially with men like Mr. Dillon and Mr. Davitt, as I have a strong confidence that we will succeed in doing. You will be yourself, I am certain, a powerful influence in that direction.

Believe me, my dear Lord Bishop,

Most cordially and devotedly Yours,

WILLIAM O'BRIEN.

MOST REV. DR. O'DONNELL,

Lord Bishop of Raphoe.

2. REDMOND *to* O'BRIEN.

18 WYNNSTAY GARDENS,

MY DEAR O'BRIEN,—I am to speak in Edinburgh on Saturday. Of course, I was not surprised at Davitt's letter. It will do no harm. What about Dillon's views? He has not said a word to me about the Conference!—Very truly Yours,

*January 14, 1903.*

J. E. REDMOND.

3. O'BRIEN *to* DILLON.

*February 7th, 1903.*

MY DEAR JOHN,—I intended to call over yesterday afternoon. Various callers made it impossible for me to get out before six o'clock, and it was then too late to call, especially as I knew Redmond had called and told you all about our interview.<sup>1</sup> In any event, I am afraid, differing as we unfortunately widely do upon questions of National policy, nothing could be gained by discussions which could lead to nothing except irritating differences as to our points of view. The situation was been rendered infinitely more difficult than it was a week or two ago by the *Freeman* agitation, but we have only to do our best and if we break down give the fullest fairplay to those who may be able to do better.—Always Yours,

JOHN DILLON, Esq., M.P.

WILLIAM O'BRIEN.

<sup>1</sup> The interview of Mr. Redmond and myself with the Under Secretary Sir Anthony McDonnell, to which Mr. Dillon and Mr. Davitt also had been invited, and at which the Treasury Bonus was successfully insisted upon.



## 4. DILLON to O'BRIEN.

2 NORTH GREAT GEORGE'S STREET,  
DUBLIN,  
*February 11th, 1903.*

MY DEAR WILLIAM,—I should of course have been glad to see you if you had been able to call on Friday, but I agree with you that so long as the dominant question is the policy and results of the Conference there is not much to be gained by discussions between us. When the Government Bill is produced I hope we may find ourselves more in accord.

I do not know whether I ought to say anything about your allusion to the *Freeman*.—There again we differ—I think you exaggerate immensely the evil effects—(from your point of view) of anything the *Freeman* has done—Redmond, Harrington and you are at all events in a position to say that you have received from the country an absolutely overwhelming vote of confidence so far as your Conference proceedings go—and as you have alluded to the *Freeman* in writing to me—I am bound to say that you have been in a position to exercise and have exercised for the past two years infinitely more influence in the *Freeman* office than I have.—Yours,

JOHN DILLON.

## 5. REDMOND to O'BRIEN.

18 WYNNSTAY GARDENS,  
KENSINGTON.

MY DEAR O'BRIEN,—Ginnell sent me a resolution of which notice had been given to the Directory by Father O'Connor of Newtownbutler, Co. Cavan (a prominent supporter of Mr. Dillon), asking Dr. O'Donnell (Bishop of Raphoe) to preside at the National Convention instead of me and inviting Sexton and Dillon to speak. Whatever may be the motive, and whatever view our friends might take of this resolution, it would certainly be hailed by our enemies as some sort of an expression of want of confidence. Much as I would like to be saved the worry, I still think the President of the League for the time being is the proper person to preside at the Convention.

I am to see Wyndham on Saturday and hope to cross that night and see you on Sunday.—Very truly Yours,

J. E. REDMOND.

*February 10, 1903.*

P.S.—I saw Blake. He is quite friendly tho' he does not understand the situation.



## 6. REDMOND to O'BRIEN.

MY DEAR O'BRIEN,—I have a letter from Dillon saying he won't be back before 1st May! So he does not mean to attend the National Convention!

I see the Archbishop and Davitt now seem to make out that they always thought a Bonus would be given!

I doubt very much if our resolution will have any effect on either them or the *Freeman*.—Very truly Yours,

J. E. REDMOND.

March 1, 1903.

## 7. "WILLIE" REDMOND to O'BRIEN.

Friday.—

25 PALACE MANSIONS,  
KENSINGTON, W.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,—There is no need for me to say how much I regret, in common with every one, your resignation. What I want to say to you now is that I am really bewildered by what you say in your last letter. I had not the *faintest idea* that anything of the kind you mention was going on in the way of a "revolt" against the Party. I knew of course that there were strong differences of opinion as to "prices," but beyond that I must say I knew nothing and I *am certain* this is the position of a great number of the Party. It is all very disheartening and deplorable, and I cannot imagine what is going to happen. If there is to be a renewal of the split, as I fear, then a great number of members will resign as well as yourself. After your last letter it seems useless to ask you to change your decision, and no one knows what to do or say, except to join, as I do most sincerely in the general expressions of pain and sorrow which are being uttered all round.—Yours very truly,

WILLIE REDMOND.







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